

MEMO

To: Interested Parties
From: Montana Conservation Voters
Date: March 19, 2026
Re: Montana Conservation Voters 2026 Legislative Candidate Endorsement Process

ABOUT

Montana Conservation Voters (MCV) and its affiliated state political action committee, the MCV Action Fund, protect our clean air, clean water, public lands, and democracy. We support leaders that fight for these rights and hold accountable those who do not.

MCV is committed to building an electorate that fully represents the residents of Montana. We are dedicated to supporting Montanans from all backgrounds to ensure that the conservation movement considers a diversity of lived experiences within our state.

BACKGROUND AND PROCESS

MCV has a record of supporting pro-conservation candidates for over 25 years. We have elected conservation leaders to all levels of government — from city councils, to the U.S. Senate, and everything in between. MCV seeks to support candidates who share our commitment to conservation and democracy, as well as who demonstrate a commitment to running a competitive campaign.

To become an MCV-endorsed candidate, interested parties must first complete a questionnaire that will ask about the candidate's stance on a range of MCV's priority issues. The endorsement questionnaire can be found on our website mtvoters.org/endorsements.

Upon receiving a completed questionnaire, staff may reach out to set up an endorsement interview with a panel made up of MCV members and staff. An endorsement interview may be waived for incumbent candidates who have been previously endorsed by MCV, if they are running for reelection to the same office. The MCV Action Fund board will ultimately make the endorsement decision upon review of candidate materials.

All endorsement decisions are ultimately up to the MCV Action Fund board.

Once a decision has been made, MCV staff will communicate to candidates whether they have received an endorsement or not.

ENDORSEMENT ROLLOUTS

It is MCV's responsibility to inform our membership when we have officially endorsed a candidate because of their public commitment to conservation and democracy. Communicating to our members about our endorsements is a permissible 501(c)4 activity.

Member communications may include:

- Press releases
 - Press releases will be sent out as soon as endorsements are finalized. Press releases may include quotes from the endorsed candidates and should be sent to all media contacts in the respective communities.
- Emails to MCV's members
 - Emails regarding endorsements are sent to MCV's membership after all endorsements are made, and again later on in the election cycle in October. These emails will also include donation links to the MCV Action Fund to support our independent expenditure work on behalf of our candidates.
- Social media posts
 - MCV will strive to do at least one social media post for every endorsed candidate before October. One post per candidate enables each candidate to easily share a unique MCV endorsement post on their social media channels. MCV will also tag the endorsed candidates' social media to ensure they see and can re-post the communication. Social media platforms used include Facebook and Instagram.
 - MCV may also post to social media to announce endorsements.
- Including endorsements in MCV's newsletter
 - MCV plans to include a hard copy of our voter guide that includes a list of our endorsements to our members across the state in October. We will also send our voter guide via email.
- Listing candidates on MCV's endorsements page
 - All MCV-endorsed candidates will be featured on MCV's [endorsement page](#). Included on the website is a bio for each candidate as well as a link to their campaign website and/or Facebook page. The MCV website will be updated as soon as endorsements are finalized.

MCV strives to do as much member communication about our endorsements as possible, based on our available resources and without jeopardizing our primary purpose. All communications that MCV-endorsed candidates would like to share with our members should be done in partnership with MCV's Program Director, Kearstyn Cook (kearstyn@mtvoters.org).

INDEPENDENT EXPENDITURES AND CANDIDATE SUPPORT

The MCV Action Fund is the primary vehicle in which MCV can support endorsed candidates. The MCV Action Fund mainly conducts independent expenditure campaigns, but can also support candidates with direct contributions or other candidate resources in partnership with MCV's Political Director, Molly Bell (molly@mtvoters.org). Independent expenditure work is firewalled off from candidates and their campaigns, while candidate support can be done on the coordinated side of the firewall in partnership with MCV's Program Director, Kearstyn Cook (kearstyn@mtvoters.org) — as long as it doesn't exceed the maximum contribution [allowable by Montana state law](#).

Independent expenditures can include:

- Direct mail to voters
- Canvassing
- Calls or texts to voters
- Paid digital ads

Candidate support can include:

- Providing an endorsement media brand kit with graphics for digital and print use
- Assistance drafting and recruiting support for letters to the editor and op-eds
- Sharing or amplifying campaign content on social media channels, as requested
- Recruiting volunteers from our network for canvassing and phone banking efforts
- Attending, coordinating, and promoting campaign events, as capacity allows
- Offering strategic guidance through meetings with staff to discuss campaign needs
- Providing educational materials, including policy background and talking points

All MCV Action Fund work will be reported to the Commissioner of Political Practice and will be done in close consultation with the MCV Action Fund compliance team.

ENDORSEMENT TIMELINE

- 3/19 - Endorsement process is rolled out for candidates without a primary
- 4/13 - Deadline for candidates without a primary to submit the MCV endorsement questionnaire
 - On a rolling basis, endorsement announcements will begin for incumbent candidates previously endorsed by MCV
 - On a rolling basis, interview requests will be sent to candidates *not* previously endorsed by MCV
- **6/2 - Primary Election**
- 6/4 - Endorsement process is rolled out for candidates who succeeded a primary challenge
- 6/29 - Deadline for ALL legislative candidates to submit the MCV endorsement questionnaire
 - On a rolling basis, endorsement announcements will begin for incumbent candidates previously endorsed by MCV
 - On a rolling basis, interview requests will be sent to candidates *not* previously endorsed by MCV
- 9/1 - All general election endorsements announced
- **11/3 - General Election**