



BILLINGS

ENDORSEMENT GUIDE

CONNECT. PROTECT. ELECT. TURNING MONTANA VALUES INTO PRIORITIES.

October 2024

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Happy October, Montana Conservation Voters!



We are just under a month from Election Day and we are dedicated to making sure that you are informed and prepared to submit your ballot on or before November 5. We've said it before, but now that we're down to the wire we must reiterate the importance of this year's election. Protecting Montana as the Last Best Place is on the line. Access to our public lands and waters is on the line. Our clean air and clean water are on the line. And our democracy is on the line.

MCV has a record of supporting pro-conservation candidates for 25 years. We have elected conservation leaders to all levels of government from city councils to the U.S. Senate and everything in between.

Enclosed, please find a detailed list of Montana Conservation Voters' candidates for the 2024 election from your region. We have endorsed candidates up and down the ballot for County Commission, State Legislature, Public Service Commission, Clerk of the Supreme Court, Supreme Court Chief and Associate Justice, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Secretary of State, State Auditor, Attorney General, Governor, U.S. House of Representatives, and U.S. Senate. MCV is committed to building an electorate that fully represents the residents of Montana and we did our homework.

To be considered for our endorsement, new candidates completed questionnaires tailored to the office they're running for that assessed their commitment to conservation, upholding Montana's Constitution and protecting our democracy. Supreme Court candidates were interviewed by MCV staff and members of the MCV Political Action Committee board. Candidates that were running for a seat that they had been previously endorsed for were not required to submit a questionnaire. *All final endorsement decisions were made by MCV's affiliated Political Action Committee.*

MCV's endorsed candidates are pro-conservation, pro-Constitution, and committed to fighting for you and the Montana we love. Now, take a minute to read about our incredible candidates and then get out there and VOTE! Don't forget to bring your friends.

Cheers — GO FIGHT WIN!

Whitney Tawney
Executive Director

MCV Membership



Join or renew your MCV Membership and get a new MCV sticker to show off your support!
mtvoters.org/join



Information about Voting in the 2024 Election:

IMPORTANT DATES:

October



**Ballots
are mailed**



**Recommended
last day to
request a
mail ballot**



**Last day to send
mail ballots**
If you don't mail it
by this date, you
can still drop it off
in-person!

November



**All ballots must
be received
at the election
office or polling
place by 8:00 p.m.
on Election Day.**

GENERAL ELECTION

**Last day to register
to vote in person**

**That's right, Montana allows
same-day voter registration!**
Make sure you have the proper
identification so you get to use
your voice at the polls.

NOT REGISTERED TO VOTE?

That's OK! Scan the QR code below
or visit votemt.gov/voter-registration



- Contact information for County Elections Offices can be found on page two of the form.
- You'll need to provide a current and valid photo identification, including but not limited to a Valid Driver's License, MT State ID Card, Tribal ID Card, or Social Security number.
- Printed forms are available at your Local County Elections Office.
- If you want to fill out your form ahead of time but don't have access to a printer, try checking for printer access at your local library!

ARE YOU REGISTERED TO VOTE?

Check your voter registration status by
scanning the QR code below or visit
voteamerica.org/am-i-registered-to-vote



MCV's LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

**This detailed report from the last legislative
session celebrates our leaders who fought for
conservation and holds accountable those who
did not. View it by scanning the QR code below
or visit mtvoters.org/scorecard**



Find out which legislative districts YOU live in by scanning the QR code below or visit leg.mt.gov/map

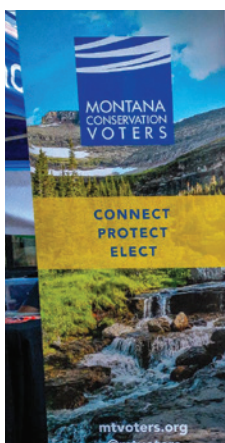


Did you know 60 of the 73 candidates endorsed by Team MCV are running for the State Legislature?



Team MCV in YOUR Community

Since last November, Team MCV has been hard at work hosting over 122 events and knocking 30K doors (and counting) across Montana to help spread the word about how to help protect Montana as the Last Best Place.



Montana Conservation Voters is a 501(c)4 nonprofit organization, and membership dues and contributions are not tax-deductible. Tax-deductible contributions may be made to the MCV Education Fund, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. Visit mtvotersedfund.org for more information.



U.S. Congress

SEN. JON TESTER for U.S. Senate*

Sen. Jon Tester is a self-described “seven-fingered dirt farmer” and former school teacher who has deep roots in hard work, responsibility, and accountability. Since 1978, Jon and his wife Sharla have been farming the same land near the town of Big Sandy, Montana that was home-steaded by Jon’s grandparents in 1912. Fired up by the Montana Legislature’s decision to deregulate Montana’s power industry (resulting in higher power costs for everyday Montanans), Jon ran for and was elected to the Montana Senate in 1998. In 2005, his colleagues chose him to serve as Montana’s Senate President — which he did until he was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2006.

Since first being sent to Washington, Jon has maintained a strong record of fighting for our public lands and Montana’s outdoor economy. In 2019, his bill to permanently reauthorize the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) passed and became law. LWCF was a landmark piece of legislation which invests in Montana by funding everything from swimming pools to soccer fields to large landscape conservation projects — providing access to public outdoor spaces in every single county in Montana. At the same time, Jon’s bipartisan Yellowstone Gateway Protection Act was also signed into law, protecting the doorstep of the nation’s first National Park and 30,000 acres of public land from industrial mining. Additionally, in 2014, Jon protected the North Fork of the Flathead River from oil and gas development and worked with conservationists, ranchers, and recreationists to pass the first collaborative wilderness bill in three decades — the Rocky Mountain Front Heritage Act. Finally, his Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act, which would protect nearly 80 thousand acres of Montana public lands as wilderness and secure access to outdoor recreation, continues to gain momentum.

Jon also championed and was the only member of the Montana delegation to vote for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (a.k.a. the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law) and the Inflation Reduction Act. Since they were passed in 2021 and 2022, these monumental new laws have made significant investments in Montana toward energy freedom, critical water infrastructure like the Milk River Project, and wildfire mitigation. In sum, Jon is a tireless defender of rural America and the Montana way of life. He will continue fighting to protect public lands and waters, bring down costs, and improve the lives of all Montanans.

NOTE: Candidates marked with an asterisk (*) denote incumbents running for reelection.

Statewide Offices

RYAN BUSSE for Governor

Ryan Busse grew up on a family cattle ranch and wheat farm before pursuing a career that led him to help build an iconic American gun company in Kalispell. He went on to enjoy a successful executive role at that company for more than 25 years. During this time, his deep commitment to community and environmental issues became increasingly apparent, starting with his advocacy against the Bush Administration’s controversial drilling plans in the sacred Badger-Two Medicine area. His dedication to public lands was further demonstrated by his service on MCV’s Board of Directors from 2008 to 2013, including his tenure as Board Chair from 2010 to 2012. His commitment to environmental protection is underscored by his sons’ involvement as plaintiffs in last year’s landmark *Held v. Montana* case, which found the State of Montana responsible for upholding the constitutional right to a “clean and healthful environment.”

The Governor is one of five Land Board commissioners — the others being the Attorney General, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Secretary of State, and State Auditor. The Board oversees the management of lands held by the state for the benefit of Montana’s educational institutions. As a member of the Land Board, Ryan would prioritize increasing public land ownership and access to those lands. He intends to focus on conserving our natural resources with the aim of preserving them — and their economic viability — for future generations.

RAPH GRAYBILL for Lieutenant Governor

Ryan’s running mate, Raph Graybill, served as Chief Legal Counsel to Governor Steve Bullock. In this role, he argued and won the case before the Montana Supreme Court that saved Habitat Montana, the state’s best conservation tool to keep farmers and ranchers on the landscape while also protecting wildlife habitat. Raph was endorsed by MCV when he ran for Montana Attorney General in 2020. He now works in the same small, family law practice that his great-grandfather started 104 years ago in Belt, Montana. Since Gianforte became governor, Raph has blocked over a dozen different unconstitutional laws that would have invaded Montanans’ constitutional rights.

**View our full
Endorsement Guide
online at:**

mtvoters.org/endorsement-guide

BEN ALKE for Attorney General

Ben Alke grew up in Helena and currently works as a Bozeman-based attorney. Ben has experience in environmental law, and his work has included fighting to re-open illegally blocked public roads to maintain access to public lands. As Montana's chief law enforcement officer, he will ensure our democracy remains strong by making decisions that are based on the facts and the law, and he will protect Montanans by impartially enforcing the laws, defending our freedoms, and guarding our state's legal and ethical standards. As a member of the state Land Board, Ben intends to prioritize increasing funding for public education and access to public lands and waterways for hunting, fishing, and recreation.

SEN. SHANNON O'BRIEN for Superintendent of Public Instruction

Sen. Shannon O'Brien is an experienced high school educator who was the dean of Missoula College and served as the education policy advisor to former Gov. Steve Bullock. Shannon also worked on education policy as the elected official for SD 46 during the 2021 and 2023 legislative sessions. As State Superintendent, she will be a strong voice in speaking out against attacks on our democracy. She intends to make sure that our students are taught civics education and that they understand that protecting democracy is both a right and the responsibility of each of us. Shannon has been previously endorsed by MCV and scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard for her work as a Senator. She is also an MCV Lifetime Champion. Shannon's voting record reflects a strong commitment to preventing the sale of public lands and underscores her belief that maintaining access to these lands is crucial for preserving our outdoor heritage. This record clearly illustrates how she would approach her duties on the Land Board.

JESSE JAMES MULLEN for Secretary of State

Jesse James Mullen lives in Deer Lodge and has spent the past 20 years working in Montana journalism. Throughout his career, he has worked to hold politicians accountable. Now, he is running for office to help return accountability to our state executive offices. As Secretary of State, Jesse will guarantee accurate voting information is available and protect and rebuild the credibility of our elections. He believes that equal access and participation in elections is essential to our democracy, and he will work tirelessly to ensure eligible voters have unobstructed access to voting. As a member of the Land Board, Jesse plans to champion our public lands as one of the most vital resources in our state. He is dedicated to protecting public access while also preserving the environmental integrity of these lands.

JOHN REPKE for State Auditor

John Repke is a business executive who received both bachelor's and master's degrees in business finance. He retired in 2021 after a 40-year career that started in the oilfields of Wyoming and took him to being the chief financial officer of several large international businesses. John's career made him an expert in insurance programs, self-funded employee health plans, and risk management. John is running for State Auditor because he believes he has the knowledge, skills, and perspective to protect Montana consumers without compromise. The State Auditor also serves as one of the five Land Board commissioners. John intends to follow the law and do everything possible to help ensure that our public-school trust is robust and that access to public lands and waterways for recreation, hunting, and fishing is protected.

State Supreme Court

JEREMIAH "JERRY" LYNCH for Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

Judge Jerry Lynch was born and raised in Butte and is a graduate of Carroll College, Montana State University, and the University of Montana. He has more than 28 years of public service experience, beginning when he clerked for federal judge and former Montana Chief Justice Paul Hatfield. He then entered private practice and was appointed federal magistrate judge of the U.S. District Court for the District of Montana in 2006 before retiring in 2019. Jerry is seeking a seat on the Montana Supreme Court in order to protect the Montana State Constitution, which he feels has withstood the test of time because it is non-partisan and is overwhelmingly supported by Montana voters. He believes that democracy depends on an independent judiciary and that fairness and impartiality are key principles for the Chief Justice. Jerry believes in evaluating each case by the facts presented, precedent, our Constitution, and existing laws. This includes upholding the strong precedent and constitutional rights that protect Montana's stream and public lands access.



Photo credit: MCV Member Aaron Agosto



KATHERINE BIDEGARAY **for Supreme Court Justice #3**

Judge Katherine Bidegaray was born and raised in Richland County and is a two-time graduate of the University of Montana. Her legal career began in 1985 as a staff attorney for the Montana State Auditor's Office. She then entered private practice and became the owner-operator of her family ranch in 1989. She has been serving as a Montana District Court Judge since 2003. Katherine is seeking a seat on the Montana Supreme Court because she believes that our legal system and the rights it protects — including privacy, education, and the conservation of Montana's landscapes — are facing significant threats. She believes that non-partisan justices are essential for upholding our Constitution, defending Montana values and rights, and maintaining a fair and impartial judiciary. She is committed to ensuring that the rights enshrined in our Constitution are effectively protected.

ERIN FARRIS-OLSEN **for Clerk of the Supreme Court**

Erin Farris-Olsen is an attorney who has worked as a law clerk for the high court and within the office of the state court administrator. As the first line of support for those seeking justice, Erin intends to restore Montanans' trust in the Clerk's office to process filings and issues before the Supreme Court. She believes that, along with Supreme Court Justices, the Clerk of the Montana Supreme Court should not be a partisan position. To that end, she intends to serve the position impartially and she would support legislation to change the position into a non-partisan race. Erin supports protecting public lands and public access and recognizes that the Supreme Court is the last line of defense for our constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment.

Public Service Commission

SUSAN BILO for District 2

Susan Biló is an instructor at Montana State University-Gallatin College with over 25 years of energy efficiency and renewable energy experience. Susan is running for office because she feels that, with the recent electricity and natural gas rate hikes, Montana's hard-working citizens and businesses are not being fairly represented and protected by their current PSC representatives. She believes that Montana can attain clean, affordable, and reliable energy infrastructure. Susan aims to ensure that renewable energy sources, which are cost-competitive with and often cheaper than traditional fuel sources, are given fair and due consideration to address costs and climate change.

She would also encourage the expansion and marketing of utility efficiency rebates that lead to reduced energy use and lower bills, and she would invite competition from businesses that want to build cost-effective renewable energy projects.

Montana State Senate

MARK NICHOLSON for SD 24

Dr. Mark Nicholson is a retired physician in family practice and psychiatry. As a legislator, Mark would support measures that would protect and fully fund Habitat Montana, which he views as crucial for fish and wildlife, public access to public lands, and family farms and ranches. He also aims to protect instream flows, which is important for fish populations, recreational activities, and overall water quality. He supports electing judges and Supreme Court justices on non-partisan ballots and protecting our right to vote, open government, voter participation in our elections, and the initiative process.

KAREN LYNCOLN for SD 26

Karen Lincoln worked for over 50 years as a social scientist with an emphasis on human impact studies related to environmental projects, public engagement, and sustainable land use. As a legislator, Karen will support Habitat Montana and work closely with other advocates on specific pieces of conservation and public access legislation, and she will support legislation that strengthens our democratic practices.

Montana State House of Representatives

MELISSA SMITH for HD 39

Melissa Smith works as a website developer and has experience in management and marketing. Alongside her work to support herself and her family, Melissa has been involved in community service all her life. She is running for office to protect our Montana Constitution and the rights of all Montanans. As a legislator, Melissa wants to work on expanding voter access as well as protecting our independent judiciary so that our constitutional protections continue to be upheld. She additionally aims to focus on growing our economy through clean energy jobs.

NOTE: Candidates marked with an asterisk (*) denote incumbents running for reelection.

ALEXANDER CLARK for HD 43

Alexander Clark is an Air Force veteran and longtime community organizer who received his Bachelors of Science in outdoor adventure leadership from Montana State University Billings. In the 2025 Montana Legislature and beyond, Alexander aims to support renewable energy legislation and enhance resilience efforts to mitigate wildfires and droughts. Additionally, he will advocate for robust funding for conservation programs like Habitat Montana to preserve vital wildlife habitat and public lands. He supports measures to increase transparency and accountability in government, as well as a vibrant and inclusive democracy that reflects the values and interests of all Montanans.

REP. DENISE BAUM for HD 45*

Rep. Denise Baum proudly served the City of Billings as a law-enforcement officer for over 20 years, with the last 15 years assigned to the Investigations Division as a detective. Denise has served in the Montana House of Representatives since last session, where she was assigned to the State Administration; Transportation; and Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committees. She intends to continue advocating for ethical wildlife management and land conservation efforts to preserve access and enjoyment for generations to come. Denise scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard.

REP. EMMA KERR-CARPENTER for HD 46*

Rep. Emma Kerr-Carpenter has spent her career working with youth and their families to overcome poverty, trauma, and crisis. During the past three legislative sessions Emma has fought to fund public safety in Billings, defend healthcare for all Montanans, protect the environment, and strengthen public education. She believes that one of Montana's greatest treasures is the beauty of its natural spaces, and she will continue fighting to ensure that all Montanans enjoy clean air and water and have access to our beautiful outdoors. Emma has been a strong champion for clean water, clean air, public lands, and democracy, as showcased by her 95% lifetime score in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard.

JAMES REAVIS for HD 47

James Reavis earned a law degree from the University of Montana and a master's in public administration before serving as a public defender for 11 years. James recently entered private practice to work in family law, criminal defense, and appeals before the Montana Supreme Court. He supports protecting fundamental rights guaranteed by the U.S. and Montana Constitutions as well as a healthy environment, clean air, and clean water. His priorities include sponsoring legislation to use federal funding to replace the fixtures and pipes in our lead-positive schools and supporting a cleaner energy future by laying out clear ground rules for the Public Service Commission.

ANNE ROSS for HD 48

Anne Ross is an artist, mother and entrepreneur with experience as an adult educator, social work case manager, spa manager, retail and hospitality worker, janitor, nanny, cook, and gig labor worker. Anne believes that we all deserve access to the incredible natural resources that make Montana an exceptional state, and that we stand to lose this access if people in power succeed in their attempts to pave the way for the privatization of public lands. She also intends to clear the path again for voter initiatives to make it on the ballot and to hold our Secretary of State, Attorney General, and other election administrators accountable when they make obvious attempts to subvert the will of the voters.

RUDOLF HADEN for HD 49

Rudolf Haden enlisted in the U.S. Navy in 1993, received a Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Scholarship to the University of Colorado at Boulder, deployed in support of multiple missions throughout the 2000s, earned a master's degree at the U.S. Naval War College, and was promoted to Commander in 2019. He retired in 2021 to Billings, where he began working as a substitute teacher with Billings Public Schools. Realizing how much he missed serving a cause greater than himself, Rudolf decided to pursue public office. His priorities include rebuilding and refurbishing rail and highway bridges, assessing industry and infrastructure over or near our precious waterways, and advocating for same-day voter registration and absentee balloting.

JANNA HAHER for HD 51

Janna Hafer has served on the Billings School Board of Trustees since 2013. She earned her bachelor's degree from Montana State University and is the chief financial officer and co-owner of a small business in Billings. Janna is an Independent candidate who believes independently-minded Montanans want to retain their rights to hunt, fish, and explore their public lands without interference. As a legislator, she will be a champion of public lands, push back against centralized control over our Supreme Court, and ensure that energy monopolies are held accountable to the people of Montana.

KIM GILLAN for HD 55

Kim Gillan was elected to the Montana State House in 1996 to represent the west side of Billings Heights. She went on to serve as the Heights Senator until 2012. Kim was previously endorsed by MCV, and during her 16 years serving in the legislature, she developed a reputation as an independent thinker — not afraid to ask questions and vote with common sense. Kim is running for office now because she feels that Carbon County residents need a strong and effective voice to stick up for their rural way of life. She feels very strongly about conserving and continuing access to Montana's open spaces and she supports legislation to facilitate community solar/renewable resources and consider additional tax incentives to encourage residents to make this transition.



Team MCV's 2024 Gala: Celebrating 25 Years in Style!

Because of you and our sponsors, MCV's Annual Gala on October 5 was our most successful event yet!

Montana's senior U.S. Senator Jon Tester, candidate for Governor Ryan Busse, many state legislators, and conservation partners from across the state gathered with nearly 200 fellow conservationists in Livingston to support MCV's 25th anniversary and our shared mission to protect Montana's clean air, clean water, healthy public lands and democracy.

Thank you to our generous Silent Auction Donors

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Montana Conservation Voters

All black and white photos throughout this endorsement guide by MCV Member Aaron Agosto.

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