

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.

MONICA TRANEL for U.S. House of Representatives, District 1

Monica Tranel is a two-time Olympian, former Public Service Commission staffer, and Missoula-based attorney who specializes in utility and energy issues. Throughout her career, Monica has consistently fought for the people of Montana. In 2022, she took NorthWestern Energy all the way to the state Supreme Court and won, saving ratepayers \$10 million dollars. Her record shows that she will fight for energy freedom and a just transition to renewable energy — despite attempts by corporations to keep Montanans paying high rates for outdated energy production. Moreover, Monica intends to champion the Headwaters Legacy Act, the Blackfoot Clearwater Stewardship Act, and similar bills to protect public lands in Congress. She will work to ensure that we have access to our public lands and that our public resources are managed so that we can all continue to enjoy their wonders for generations to come. Monica was previously endorsed by Team MCV during her 2022 bid for the seat now held by Rep. Ryan Zinke.

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.

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.



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

ELENA EVANS for District 4

Elena Evans is a geologist, working mother, and Independent candidate running for Montana's PSC District 4. She currently works as Missoula County's environmental health manager. Through her career as a public servant, Elena has developed a unique understanding of how complex rules and regulations affect local people. As Commissioner, she aims to work with regulated entities to prioritize the infrastructure necessary to reliably provide utility services over the next 50 years. Elena is ready to use her knowledge, experience, and skills on the PSC to set up Montana's energy future for the next generation and cut costs for regular Montanans instead of cutting deals with Northwestern Energy.

County Commission

JOSH SLOTNICK for **Missoula County Commissioner**

Josh Slotnick has been farming in Missoula with his wife on their family farm since 1992. In 1996, he co-founded Garden City Harvest and a community farm run in partnership with the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Montana. Josh's conservation-based objectives include partnering with agencies and organizations on efforts including distributed solar and wind energy production on both the individual and community scale. Josh was previously endorsed by MCV when he initially ran for this seat in 2018.

Montana State Senate

DEVIN JACKSON for SD 45

Devin Jackson grew up in the Bitterroot and served on the Lolo Community Council for 15 years. Devin supports a just transition to renewable energy sources in Montana by making sure that workers get fairly compensated. Additionally, he wants to ensure Montanans maintain access to public lands, public waters, and public wildlife. He also aims to increase Department of Environmental Quality regulations to protect Montana's 170,000 miles of rivers and 3,200 named lakes from unchecked mining operations.

JACINDA MORIGEAU for SD 46

Jacinda Morigeau is a Bitterroot Salish woman and an enrolled member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Jacinda currently serves as Vice-Chairperson on the Board of Directors at All Nations Health Center, as a member of the Montana Women Vote Advisory Board, and as Communications Manager at United Way of Missoula County. In the 2025 Montana Legislature and beyond, she aims to champion conservation initiatives that uphold the Montana Constitution and protect the right to vote, especially in Indian Country. This entails ensuring equitable access to the polls for all Montanans, particularly Indigenous peoples, and advocating for policies that safeguard Indigenous peoples' rights and honor their sovereignty, including meaningful consultation on conservation decisions and the protection of sacred lands.

SEN. ELLIE BOLDMAN for SD 47*

Sen. Ellie Boldman is an attorney and mom who represented Missoula in the state House of Representatives from 2011 to 2019 before becoming a Senator in 2020. In the 2025 Legislature, Ellie will maintain her solid voting record in support of our constitutional rights, including a clean and healthful environment and access to voting. Ellie has been previously endorsed by MCV and scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard. She is also an MCV Lifetime Champion.

Montana State House of Representatives

REP. MARK THANE for HD 89*

Rep. Mark Thane is a University of Montana graduate who had a thirty-nine year career in Missoula County's Public Schools before retiring as superintendent in 2019. His community engagement has included service on a number of local boards, and his experience has taught him that the best decisions are made only after all perspectives are heard and all ideas thoroughly vetted. Mark was first elected to the legislature in 2021. His priorities include affordable and accessible healthcare and case management services, high-quality public schools and the Montana University System, access to our public lands and waterways, and investment in workforce development. Mark scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard and is an MCV Lifetime Champion.

SHELLY FYANT for HD 91

Shelly Fyant was raised on a ranch in Arlee, which instilled a strong work ethic and the value of community. As former Chairwoman of the Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes, she applied those values to working with state and federal leaders as well as influential organizations and businesses. Shelly also worked for the U.S. Forest Service in the Region One Information Office and the Powell Ranger District while attending the University of Montana, and she helped create the Three Chiefs Cultural Center. She agrees that Montana is the "Last Best Place" and needs unwavering protection of the environment so that future generations can enjoy what we have enjoyed. She believes maintaining fisheries, wildlife habitats, and clean air and water should be priorities for the state, as well as fighting any voter suppression efforts.

REP. CONNIE KEOGH for HD 92*

Rep. Connie Keogh grew up on a ranch in Roscoe, Montana. Connie was a first-generation college student and went on to teach elementary and special education for over 20 years. She has served as a legislator since 2019 and brought her strong work ethic and persistence to the office by serving on the Education, Judiciary, and Agriculture Committees. She will continue to champion the environment by advocating for clean energy and moving us toward renewables, lobbying for net metering practices and community solar opportunities, and working to enable homeowners to purchase solar or enhance their homes through energy conservation methods. Connie will ensure our public lands and sacred places are kept in public hands, and hold industry accountable for their impact to our environment. Connie scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard and is an MCV Lifetime Champion.

REP. KATIE SULLIVAN for HD 93*

During the 2023 session, House Minority Whip Rep. Katie Sullivan acted as a consistent voice for common-sense legislation on issues of conservation, democracy, and energy. Katie worked hard to fend off attacks on the Habitat Montana portion of the recreational marijuana tax revenue all while serving as the Vice Chair of the House Energy, Technology and Federal Relations Committee. Her work on this committee was essential to forcing honest conversations about energy freedom and the future of energy production in Montana. Katie scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard and is an MCV Lifetime Champion.

REP. MARILYN MARLER for HD 94*

Rep. Marilyn Marler worked at the University of Montana as a botanist, science educator, and manager of natural areas on Mt. Sentinel and at Fort Missoula before starting a new role as Executive Director of the Montana Natural History Center on September 16, 2024. Marilyn previously served three terms on the Missoula City Council, including eight years as Council President. During her five-year tenure in the House of Representatives, she has demonstrated that she can get things done. Marilyn is a strong advocate for wildlife, public lands, and conservation, and her deep knowledge of fish and wildlife issues was an essential factor in her leadership as Vice Chair of the House Natural Resources and member of the House Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Committees. She has been a steady voice for democracy and has introduced important legislation to update the state's hunting laws to better support resident hunters. Marilyn scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard and is an MCV Lifetime Champion.

REP. ZOOEY ZEPHYR for HD 95*

Rep. Zooey Zephyr spent much of her adult life working as a public employee for the University of Montana, as well as working as a community advocate. Zooey currently serves Missoula as a legislator, and she is running for re-election because she believes that the best way to fight for social and economic justice is to get into the room where the laws are being written. She has a history of supporting pro-climate policies in the Montana State Legislature, speaking up passionately on the issues that set her apart, and working with folks at the national level who have been progressive champions of climate action. She believes there are positive legislative solutions to be worked toward, including promoting renewable energy, working to preserve and care for our public lands, improving infrastructure and public transportation across Montana, and working to promote smart growth within Montana's cities. Zooey scored 86% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard.

Montana State House of Representatives (cont'd)

REP. BOB CARTER for HD 96*

Rep. Bob Carter grew up working on farms and ranches in central Montana before attending the University of Montana. Bob had a career in software development and as chief information officer of various leasing and business finance related companies before being elected to the legislature, where he's been assigned to the Agriculture, Business and Labor, and Transportation Committees. He is a stay-at-home dad, foster parent, and volunteer for the boards of several civic, nonprofit, agriculture, childhood and education related causes in Missoula. This width and breadth of life experience is what he takes to the legislature. Some of Bob's priorities include voting rights, public lands, wildlife habitat, enjoying and protecting our natural resources, and renewable energy. Bob scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard.

MELODY CUNNINGHAM for HD 97

Melody Cunningham has been a practicing pediatrician for 30 years caring for children with cancer and children at end-of-life. Her decades of medical experience and advocacy for children and families enable Melody to bring civil and thoughtful decision-making to the Montana House of Representatives. During the last legislative session, Melody testified in Helena nearly weekly on bills that were important for children, families, climate and education. She was able to connect across the aisle and hopes to bring that experience to the 2025 session. Melody realizes that protection of our environment promotes resiliency and our local economies. She is a stalwart supporter of clean energy technology and believes that the only way to ensure the future of the planet for our children and grandchildren is to transition to sustainable energy sources. Her specific legislative priorities include reviving conservation financing specifically for Habitat Montana and fighting to ensure that the legislature does not make judicial appointees partisan.

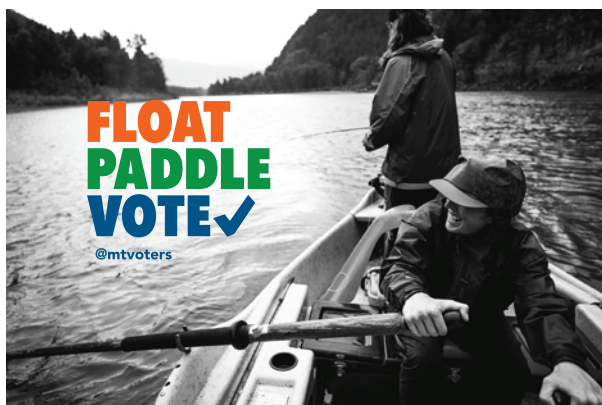


Photo credit: MCV Member Aaron Agosto

REP. JONATHAN KARLEN for HD 98*

Rep. Jonathan Karlen works as a research associate at the University of Montana's Boone and Crockett Wildlife Conservation Program. Jonathan is also an instructor with the Clark Fork Watershed Education Program and coaches skiing on the weekends with the Missoula Ski Education Foundation. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Montana. Jonathan has served in the Montana House of Representatives since 2023, where he was assigned to the Business and Labor; Natural Resources; Legislative Administration; and Fish, Wildlife & Parks Committees. Last session, he fought legislation aimed at weakening Montana's climate and environmental protection laws. He also sponsored several bills, including one that supported resident hunters and anglers by enacting quotas for several non-resident license types that have no cap. Jonathan scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard.

REP. TOM FRANCE for HD 99*

Rep. Tom France has a law degree and worked for the National Wildlife Federation before retiring in 2020. Tom has served in the Montana House of Representatives since 2021, where he was assigned to the Judiciary; Natural Resources; and Fish, Wildlife and Parks Committees. He most recently sponsored a bill limiting the number of Smith River permits available to non-residents to no more than 10% of the total permits and allocating a portion of the user fees to fund projects that protect, enhance, and restore the river's natural and recreational resources. Tom is very interested in net metering and finding ways to reward Montanans who invest in renewable energy, and it is his highest priority to keep public lands in public hands. Tom scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard and is an MCV Lifetime Champion.

REP. SJ HOWELL for HD 100*

Rep. SJ Howell grew up in Billings before moving to Missoula to attend undergrad at the University of Montana. SJ serves as a legislator for Missoula and is the executive director of the statewide nonprofit organization Montana Women Vote, where they initially worked as an advocate and organizer at the State Legislature from 2013 to 2021. They believe that Montanans deserve to have access to the ballot without cumbersome barriers, and in light of policy makers passing voter suppression laws during the 2021 Montana legislative session, they will fight against similar attempts moving forward. In addition to supporting Montanans' right to vote and our independent judiciary, SJ will support any legislation that leverages funding for energy freedom, protects Montana's rivers and lakes, and protects and maintains our public lands, waters, and wildlife. SJ scored 100% in MCV's 2023 Legislative Scorecard.



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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