

2026 EYE ON THE VOTE



**MONTANA
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE**

WE MEAN BUSINESS

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MONTANA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



In January 2020, the Montana Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted to end the Chamber's long history of endorsing candidates for partisan statewide office. The Chamber Board continues to endorse candidates for the Montana Supreme Court, a non-partisan position, and you will see that the Board endorsed Dan Wilson for Montana Supreme Court.

Ultimately, the board determined that the appropriate role of the Chamber was that of a convener—bringing candidates to our members with information that may be helpful in their decision making.

Enclosed you will find one-page profiles of individuals who are running to serve in regional and statewide capacities – positions that can change the cost of doing business with

each decision. We challenged each candidate to summarize key positions using questions that focus on the relationship between the office they seek and business interests. The Montana Chamber contacted all candidates and those that responded by our deadline are included in this document, organized by office and then alphabetically by last name.

Thank you to candidates for not only participating in this project, but also for stepping up and making sacrifices to run for office.

Also included in this publication are summaries regarding two of three ballot initiatives that will affect every business in the state. Ballot initiatives are largely overlooked by most voters, and the outcomes of those decisions can heavily impact businesses. The Montana Chamber did not take a position or analyze CI-132, a ballot initiative to keep Montana judicial races non-partisan. Our intent is to provide meaningful, trusted information that can help form your decision.

Elections have consequences. And businesses have a lot at stake in every election cycle. As business and community leaders, I encourage you to share this publication with your colleagues, employees, friends and family.

Sincerely,

Todd O'Hair
Montana Chamber of Commerce
President & CEO

MONTANA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ENDORSES JUDGE DAN WILSON

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: WILSONFORJUSTICE.COM



Judge Dan Wilson has earned the confidence of Montana's largest and oldest business advocacy organization, the Montana Chamber of Commerce. The Montana Supreme Court race is one of the most consequential races this year and is certain to draw millions of dollars in spending. It is a race that deserves the attention that matches the impact on Montana's economy.

The Montana Chamber of Commerce does not endorse candidates in statewide partisan races. The Montana Supreme Court race is the only endorsement this organized business voice will offer in 2026 and that speaks to the significance of this contest to

businesses, economic development and Montana's future business climate.

When developing our strategic plan to improve Montana's economy nearly ten years ago, business leaders across the state of Montana were frustrated by a judicial system they viewed as harmful to

Montana's business climate. Enough so that "judicial climate" was listed along with taxes and regulations as a headwind to creating a stronger economy in the Big Sky state.

Business leaders understand an inequitable ruling in court is every bit as harmful to the general business climate as raising taxes or creating onerous regulations.

Electing fair, impartial, and balanced judicial candidates to the Montana Supreme Court is critical to ensure we have an independent, reasoned and stable judicial climate in Montana. It is foundational to a healthy business climate that grows an economy.

It is appropriate that the state's largest business advocacy organization, the Montana Chamber of Commerce, invests the time and energy in these races so business leaders have information relevant to them and their livelihoods.

The Montana Chamber of

Commerce Board of Directors take the responsibility of endorsing (or not endorsing) Supreme Court candidates seriously. Our endorsement comes after a committee of attorneys and retired judges interviewed both candidates, evaluated their temperament, applicable rulings and ability to be fair and unbiased in the decision-making process.

It is important to know that the Montana Chamber of Commerce focused the interviews, deliberations and ultimately the endorsement, solely on business related issues. Certainly, you will hear from environmental groups, labor, trial attorneys, first and second amendment special interests, and others, advancing their candidate of choice based on their specific interest.

The race for Montana Supreme Court will get hot, noisy and probably confusing as it gets closer to election day. To large extent, you can learn a lot about a candidate by their endorsements and financial backers. For those who place a high priority in economic and business issues, the Montana Chamber of Commerce is proud to endorse Judge Dan Wilson for Montana Supreme Court.

KURT ALME

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: ALMEFORSENATE.COM



→ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I'm a Montana native, born in Great Falls. My dad was a high school math teacher, and my mom taught elementary school. I grew up across the state — from Dillon to Victor to Helena — before graduating high school in Miles City.

I met my wife, Sandra, at law school and we've been married for 32 years. We live in Billings, where we bought a small house, made the payments, and started our family - raising our two now grown kids.

After law school, I went to work with the Crowley Fleck law firm - representing small businesses and other clients across MT. Since then, I have spent most of my career serving the state as a federal prosecutor, a public servant, and President of Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation.

I've been honored to serve as Revenue Director under Governor Judy Martz, as Budget Director under Governor Gianforte, and as a U.S. Attorney twice, after being nominated by President Trump and confirmed by the Senate. I'm not a career politician and have never held elected office.

I'm running because MT is my home. My wife and I have a wonderful life here, and we want our kids and grandkids to have an even better life — with the same values and even greater opportunities than we have. There is important work we need to do for MT families - make life more affordable, make our communities safer, and protect our way of life.

I'm the only candidate who has spearheaded two of the largest tax cuts in state history and balanced our state budget to make life more affordable.

I'm the only candidate who has been

endorsed by 34 sheriffs, locked up violent criminals and drug dealers, and reduced violent crime to make our communities safer.

My entire life I've stepped up to public and community service. I'm ready to serve again as Montana's next U.S. Senator. I'd be honored to earn your vote and ensure your voice is heard in Washington.

→ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** Montana used to be a tough place to do business. For decades, our biggest exports were beef, grain, copper, and our kids - as they left to find good-paying jobs.

Under Governor Martz, we pursued pro-growth policies to create good-paying jobs. As Revenue Director, I spearheaded the largest income tax rate reduction in state history - making our tax rates competitive and putting over half a billion dollars back into taxpayers' pockets in just the first 5 years!

As Budget Director, I worked in the Gianforte administration with a similar mission: rein in spending, lower anti-competitive taxes, and create a business-friendly environment to create good-paying jobs. And we accomplished them all!

We cut the previous administration's proposed budget by nearly \$150 million, balanced the budget, delivered one of the largest tax cuts in state history, and helped make Montana debt-free.

Like the policies we fought for in Helena, we need leaders who will fight for them in Washington: low and stable taxes, balanced budgets, and less red tape.

As I meet with Montanans across our state, they tell me they're struggling to make ends meet. Everything from gas and groceries to health care and housing costs too much.

Let's not forget what caused that to happen: Washington's reckless spending under President Biden produced the highest inflation in over 40 years. And we all are still paying the price.

As Senator, making life more affordable will be my top priority.

We must rein in Washington's spending that's driving up prices and raising interest and mortgage rates. To cut spending, I'll start where I've already delivered results as a federal prosecutor: stopping waste, fraud, and abuse - which Secretary Bessent has said could be up to 10% of the federal budget.

We must also put more money in Montanans' pockets. That's why I'll fight for low taxes that make paychecks bigger. After

all, it's not the government's money - it's yours. I'll also fight to protect the important provisions of the Working Families Tax Cuts Act, and the stability it provides for businesses to plan and invest. My two liberal opponents opposed it.

Finally, we need to continue cutting burdensome red tape to lower costs, unleash innovation, and help job-creators do what they do best. Cutting red tape will increase housing supply and unleash responsible energy production to lower housing and energy costs for hardworking families.

Pro-jobs, pro-family, pro-business policies make our communities stronger. As Senator, I am looking forward to working together with our Chambers and small businesses to deliver results for Montanans.

→ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?**

Let's not forget, President Biden waged a war on American-made energy, canceling responsible projects and increasing burdensome regulations.

As a result, we are spending too much to fill up our tanks and to heat and cool our homes.

To make life more affordable, I support unleashing responsible energy production of all types. More energy means cheaper gas and electricity, and lower energy costs mean cheaper groceries and prices on every shelf. Having lived in eastern Montana, I know that more energy production will also create good-paying jobs and revive the American Dream in our rural communities. Hardworking MT families need leaders who will cut red tape to protect and create more of those good-paying jobs. In Miles City, we looked with envy at the improvements to the schools and communities in Baker to our east and Colstrip to our west from energy production.

Importantly, energy security is national security. We can't afford to depend on other countries for our energy needs. And with technology continuing to advance, we can increase energy production while also protecting our environment.

As Senator, I will fight for commonsense energy policies - not only to lower prices for hardworking families, but also to create jobs that families can rely on to make ends meet. That means unleashing American energy and pursuing an all-of-the-above approach.

ALANI BANKHEAD

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: ALANIFORMT.COM



→ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I am Alani Bankhead, and I have spent my career on the side of people who cannot hire a lobbyist. Twenty-one years in the Air Force, retiring as a lieutenant colonel, and more than two decades as a federal special agent hunting terror networks, spies and child predators. I have run investigations where the facts decided the outcome and nothing else did. That is how I intend to legislate. I live in Helena. I am not taking a dime of corporate PAC money in this race, so when a Montana business owner tells me something is broken, there is no one standing between us.

→ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** Montana businesses are being squeezed by costs they did not set and cannot negotiate, so that is where I would start.

Input costs and consolidation. Four packers control most of the beef market, and our ranchers take the price they are given. I support mandatory country-of-origin labeling and real antitrust enforcement in agriculture, so a Montana producer competes on quality instead of on someone else's market power.

Health care as a business expense. For most small employers here, health insurance is the line item that decides whether they can hire. Bringing that cost down is small-business policy, not just health policy.

Workforce. Child care is the quiet reason Montana jobs go unfilled, and housing costs are pushing working people out of the towns that employ them. Employers cannot fix either one alone.

Certainty. Businesses can plan around a rule. They cannot plan around a rule that changes every quarter. I will back stable, predictable federal policy, including on trade, where whipsawing tariffs have raised costs for Montana ag and manufacturing without a strategy behind them.

→ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and**

economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?

Affordability and reliability come first. I will not support an energy plan that raises your bill or leaves you in the dark. NorthWestern Energy won a 28% residential rate increase in 2023, and Montana households and businesses are still absorbing it.

Then I would count the demand honestly. NorthWestern has signed agreements for up to roughly 1,400 megawatts of new data-center load. That is an enormous new draw on the same grid your members already pay for, and the question of who pays for the buildout has to be answered before the concrete is poured, not after. I am not against Montana energy. I am against Montana ratepayers subsidizing someone else's server farm.

On diversification, I am a strong believer in alternative energy done the Montana way. Out here the grid is thin and the distances are long, so generation close to where the power is used is a resilience issue before it is anything else. Three concrete steps: reopen USDA's Rural Energy for America program grants so ranchers and rural businesses can cut their own energy costs, route clean-energy tax credits so Montana residents and co-ops capture the value instead of out-of-state developers, and protect the direct-pay option that lets co-ops and public entities use those credits at all.

SETH BODNAR

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: **SETHFORMONTANA.COM**



→ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I'm Seth Bodnar, an Independent candidate for U.S. Senate. I'm the son of two public school teachers, a West Point graduate, and I spent over a decade on active duty in the Army, including combat tours in Iraq and service as a Green Beret. After the military, I worked in business before spending the last eight years leading the University of Montana, where I helped turn around a decade of enrollment decline, doubled research funding, and restored the university's financial stability. My wife Chelsea is a fifth-generation Montanan and a pediatrician,

and we're raising our three kids as sixth-generation Montanans. I'm running as an Independent because I believe Montana businesses and families deserve a senator who answers to them, not to a national party.

→ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** My priorities start with lowering the costs that make it harder for Montana businesses to compete: cutting the red tape that slows down construction and permitting, restoring predictable trade policy so producers and manufacturers can plan more than one quarter ahead, and passing a full, overdue Farm Bill that gives Montana's agricultural economy some certainty. I'll fight to protect the small-business pass-through deduction that roughly 29,000 Montana businesses rely on, and to enforce antitrust laws so a handful of national monopolies—in meatpacking, in pharmaceuticals, in the media—can't squeeze out Montana's small and mid-sized businesses. I also believe workforce development is a competitiveness issue as much as a social one: real investment in trades, apprenticeships, and technical training so Montana businesses can actually find and keep the workers they need. And I'll fight to make sure Montana labor and Montana communities benefit directly

from major federal projects happening in this state, like the Sentinel missile modernization, rather than seeing that work go to out-of-state contractors.

→ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?** I support an all-of-the-above energy strategy—coal, hydro, oil, gas, and wind—because every one of those is somebody's paycheck in Montana, and because relying on a single source of energy is exactly the kind of vulnerability this country can't afford. In the military, we were taught never to depend on a single supply line, and I think that same principle applies directly to energy policy. Reliability and affordability also mean making sure new demand on the grid doesn't get quietly shifted onto everyday ratepayers. I don't think Washington should be picking winners and losers in Montana's energy mix based on ideology. I think Montana businesses and families should get to keep the lights on, affordably and reliably, without out-of-state interests or federal mandates deciding that for them.

AARON FLINT

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: FLINTFORMONTANA.COM



→ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I'm Aaron Flint, a fifth-generation Montanan raised in Glasgow and the Flathead. After the September 11th terrorist attack on our nation, I enlisted in the Montana Army National Guard deploying to combat zones in Iraq and Afghanistan. I retired after more than 20 years as a Lt. Colonel. Between deployments I spent nearly 15 years as a local TV and radio anchor listening to Montanans across our state and taking my show on the road. My wife, Jessica, and I are raising our three children in Kalispell. I'm running for Congress to make Montana more affordable and protect the opportunities that make it a great place to live and work.

→ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** My priority is to lower the cost of doing business and increase certainty so Montana employers can grow and create good-paying jobs. Keeping taxes low and cutting unnecessary regulations will give businesses more room to hire and expand. I would also support federal permitting reform to get projects moving and lower energy costs for businesses and their customers.

First and foremost we need to make permanent the tax cuts and structural reforms in H.R. 1. Yes, lower taxes help businesses reinvest in their workforce and facilities and growth; however, certainty about their burden for doing business and compliance costs is just as important for long-term planning.

Businesses cannot grow without enough skilled workers. I would introduce legislation to help schools offer shop classes and connect students with training in local businesses: a shop class in every school or a classroom in every shop. Expanding apprenticeships and career and technical education will help employers find the workers they need while giving young Montanans a path to good-paying jobs close to home.

We should also revitalize industries like mining, manufacturing, and timber. Montana has the resources and workers to produce more here at home. Faster permitting, responsible resource development, and fewer unnecessary regulations will help get these industries up and running again, lowering costs across the board, especially for businesses that rely on their raw materials and manufactured goods.

→ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?**

My military service taught me that energy security is national security. Families need electricity they can afford, and businesses need dependable power to operate and grow. I support an all-of-the-above approach that includes coal, natural gas, hydropower, nuclear, and renewables.

That requires speeding up federal permits for American energy production, power plants, and the transmission infrastructure that delivers electricity to homes and businesses. We also need pipelines to supply natural gas generation. I would support bipartisan permitting reform and oppose mandates that shut down dependable power before reliable replacements are available.

I would also press the President to bring the war in Iran to a speedy and conclusive end that eliminates the terrorist threat and reopens global energy trade. Disruptions overseas can raise fuel costs, including the natural gas used to generate electricity. Thankfully, we have a President who is committed to expanding American energy production, including the natural gas that powers our electric grid. I would continue this effort by unleashing American energy and speeding up permits for production and pipelines to lower fuel and electricity costs for families and businesses.

SAM FORSTAG

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: [SAMFORMONTANA.COM](https://samformontana.com)



→ **Briefly introduce yourself.** My name is Sam Forstag, and I am running for Congress to make sure working people have a voice in our government. I was raised by a mom who picked up extra nursing shifts to provide for my sister and I, and a dad who became a public school teacher. Both made just enough to get by. After graduating from the University of Montana I began working as a wildland firefighter and, eventually, a smokejumper. Between fire seasons, I worked as an organizer and advocate on issues like public education, public libraries, housing & homelessness, and defending our constitutional freedoms. In Congress, I'll fight tirelessly to make sure every Montanan can work a full time job and afford housing, healthcare, and childcare, and to rebalance our economy so that small businesses, farms and ranches have the support they need to compete against the corporations that have come to have far too loud a voice in our political system.

→ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** The growing lack of workforce

housing in Montana has reached crisis levels in many parts of Western Montana as skyrocketing housing costs make it near-impossible for families to find a home they can afford near their job. My top priority is to fight for the investments and reforms we need to tackle that crisis. That means stepping up invests in programs like the Community Development Block Grant and investing in programs like community land trusts to build permanently affordable workforce housing, incentivizing regulatory & zoning reform so we can build housing where we need it, and expanding opportunities for apprenticeships & trade education so that we have the skilled workers we need to build that housing.

I'll also fight for investments in healthcare & childcare to make sure that access to basic services isn't an impediment to working families staying in Montana, and so that small businesses aren't stuck paying an ever-growing share of their revenue just trying to keep up with skyrocketing healthcare costs for their employees. For healthcare, that means giving every American the choice of joining Medicare, and renewing & expanding the ACA subsidies so that can be the choice of free healthcare for every working class Montanan. On childcare, that means expanding block grants and public-private partnerships to make sure Montana families have access to affordable childcare in our own backyard, and that the next generation of Montanans can stick around to raise a family at home, as I hope to do myself.

More broadly, businesses across our state are being hurt by the lack of certainty and dependability that is coming from the White House. Between the war in Iran, the uneven and reckless application of trade tariffs, and rising inflation, it's nearly impossible for businesses to plan for next week, let alone next year. I'll fight to make sure Congress exercises its constitutional duties of oversight with reforms to make sure tariffs cannot be levied without congressional approval and war can't be waged without congressional authorization.

→ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?**

Montana produces energy that powers homes and our businesses across our region, but energy prices have been spiking for years. Meanwhile, underinvestments in transmission and a false dichotomy between clean energy and cheap energy threatens to keep prices high and supply artificially low for years to come.

I'll fight for common sense investments in clean power generation and expanded transmission to make sure we're leveraging federal dollars to lower electrical costs, increase transmission capacity, and make it easier for co-ops and investors to scale up clean energy projects by making it easier to get that energy to market.

I'll support legislation like the Lower Utility Rates Act to lower energy costs for Montana families and businesses, and I'll fight for federal investments in modernizing our electrical grid to create good-paying jobs for our electricians and linemen and build out the infrastructure we need to support the next generation of energy generation here in Montana. Studies show that for every \$1 invested in transmission build-out, American households and businesses would see around \$2 in savings, and that's precisely the sort of wise investment that the federal government ought to be making. It's not just "give everyone a dollar," it's an investment that our government could make in our future - the sort that we made not so long ago - that goes twice as far in helping working people and small businesses.

TROY DOWNING

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: TROYDOWNING.COM



→ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I'm Troy Downing, and I represent Montana's Second Congressional District. I'm a businessman, former Montana State Auditor and Commissioner of Securities and Insurance, and Air Force and Air National Guard veteran who served two tours in Afghanistan. Those experiences taught me the value of service, sound decision-making, and giving people the tools to succeed. My wife, Heather, and I live in Helena, we have four grown children, and one grandchild.

→ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** I'll continue fighting for competitive taxes, fewer regulations, and better access to capital for Montana businesses. My Expanding Access to Capital for Rural Job Creators Act helps with the unique challenges facing rural entrepreneurs. The Main Street Capital Access Act, which I cosponsored, streamlines community banks' ability to lend to local businesses, to the people they know, the communities they know, and the businesses they know while reducing the regulatory excess that slows down or forecloses on these opportunities. Employers also depend on reliable infrastructure and safe communities. That's why I've fought for millions in Community Project Funding for infrastructure and public safety priorities including Billings water infrastructure, updated first responder equipment, and rural infrastructure projects across the district. My focus is on practical investments that help Montana communities and businesses grow.

→ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?** . Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity

supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected? Reliable, affordable energy is paramount to continued growth and success. Access and affordability is essential for Montana families, employers, and national security. I introduced the COAL POWER Act and helped pass legislation reversing federal restrictions on coal leasing in eastern Montana to protect a dependable domestic energy resource. I've also advanced the Crow Tribe Water Rights Settlement Amendments Act, which supports future hydropower development at the Yellowtail Afterbay Dam. As of this writing, the act has passed both chambers and is headed to the President's desk. Permitting reform is a high priority. I will continue working to pass legislation to reduce permitting delays, maintain existing generation, and support a diverse energy supply that can meet growing demand without driving up costs.

MICHAEL EISENHAUER

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: EISENHAUERFORCONGRESS.COM



➔ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I am the Independent candidate for Congress in Montana's 2nd Congressional District, because Montana deserves a Representative who is accountable to Montanans rather than party leadership, special interests or Washington politics. Congress is broken – and the two-party duopoly is at the root of the problem. We need a new pathway, with less anger, less fear-mongering, less finger pointing, and more solutions. I am running to be part of the solution, as opposed to being part of the problem. My approach is to listen, examine the evidence, work across party lines whenever possible, and put Montana first. My loyalty is to Montana – and not party bosses – and not to the White House. I call Great Falls home. I am a physician/cardiologist and Retired US Army Colonel after 24 years of uniformed military service.

➔ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** I believe Montana needs a pro-business economic environment that rewards work, entrepreneurship, investment and innovation—not one that favors politically

connected corporations over small businesses:

Reduce the cost of doing business. I will support targeted tax relief for small businesses, reduce unnecessary federal regulations and paperwork, and work to lower healthcare, energy and other costs that make it harder for Montana businesses to hire and grow.

Restore competition. Small businesses should not have to compete against monopolies or highly concentrated industries with enormous market power. I will support stronger antitrust enforcement and greater competition in agriculture, healthcare, energy, technology and other important sectors.

Support Montana energy and infrastructure. Montana has tremendous energy and natural resources. I support an all-of-the-above energy policy—including oil, natural gas, coal, hydropower, wind, solar, geothermal and small modular nuclear—while investing in the infrastructure necessary to move that energy and support economic growth.

Strengthen our workforce. I will support apprenticeships, trade schools, community colleges and workforce programs that give Montanans the skills employers actually need.

Protect independent businesses, farmers and ranchers. That means Right to Repair, fair competition, stronger agricultural markets and trade policies that give Montana producers a fair opportunity to compete.

I will focus on affordability. Businesses cannot succeed when their employees cannot afford housing, healthcare, transportation and other necessities.

As an Independent Congressman, I will work with anyone—Republican, Democrat, Independent or other—when it helps Montana businesses create jobs, invest in our communities and compete successfully. My goal is simple: make Montana a place where small businesses can start, family businesses can survive, and Montana companies can grow.

➔ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and**

economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?

America cannot have a strong economy or defend itself if the power grid is unreliable, or if we are dependent on foreign energy or bottlenecked supply chains. For Montana, reliable electricity isn't an abstract Washington issue—it affects every family, ranch, hospital, and small business in our state.

Energy independence, grid reliability and affordable electricity are foundations of American economic strength and national security.

We need to modernize our electric grid, expand transmission, strengthen cybersecurity, and make sure reliable generation is replaced before it is retired.

Montana has enormous energy resources, and we should use them. That means protecting reliable generation while expanding hydropower, natural gas, coal, wind, solar, geothermal and nuclear based on what works and what is cost-effective. I support expanding domestic energy production and critical grid components, while reducing unnecessary permitting delays that prevent needed infrastructure from being built.

And we have to keep electricity affordable. I will make sure new large- and very-large energy users (including data centers, if built) pay their fair share of the generation and transmission infrastructure, rather than shifting those costs onto Montana families and small businesses.

PATRICK MCCRACKEN

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: MCCRACKENFORMONTANA.COM



→ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I am Patrick McCracken, the Montana Libertarian Party endorsed candidate for Montana's Eastern House District. I'm a fourth generation Montanan. I grew up a military kid, and no matter where the Department of Defense sent us, Montana was home. I graduated from Billings West High and earned a Bachelor's Degree in Earth Science from Montana State University in Bozeman. I've worked lift lines, dug ditches, and

banged nails in all seasons. I spent 10 years as a financial advisor, and today I help families hold part of their savings in physical gold. I've seen firsthand what inflation does to people's savings. I am raising my family here in Montana just like many of you.

I'm running because the Constitution is a limit on government, and too many representatives in Washington treat it as a suggestion. Washington's misplaced priorities have landed on our kitchen tables and in our gas tanks, hurting our wallets and putting families under pressure. As your Representative, I'll read every bill and weigh its consequences for Montanans, vote against anything the Constitution doesn't authorize, and answer to Eastern Montana, not to party leaders or lobbyists.

→ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** There are bills that have been working through Congress over the last few years that I am in favor of. The first, Audit the Fed, is a necessary first step to restraining the increase in money supply to help dampen the effects of inflation on producers' input costs and consumers' total costs. The PRIME Act allows the ranching community some much needed relief from the meatpacker monopoly.

Country of Origin labeling allows increased choice and market signals on the consumer side. The SAFE Banking legislation would increase deposits at Montana's banks and allow legal Montana businesses access to the normal banking services most of us take for granted.

→ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?**

Reliable electrical power is the foundation of our economy. It's even better when it's cheap. At a national level, the ADVANCE Act's faster nuclear licensing is long overdue. The Kemmerer, Wyoming, nuclear project stands as evidence. Montana can potentially do the same, without taxpayer subsidies, and with the power serving Montanans first. If data centers are to be built, they need to bring their own power or pay for its provision. This includes all of the transmission and grid updates they require. We haven't forgotten Montana Power and Touch America. I'll support federal rules requiring data centers to pay their own way. Montanans have a history of having to pay twice for power capacity. The third time is not charming.

BRIAN MILLER

CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: [MILLER4CONGRESS.COM](https://miller4congress.com)



➔ **Briefly introduce yourself.** I'm a civil trial attorney who has been litigating throughout Montana for 15 years. I'm also the father of two kids, a son who's 20 and a daughter who's 23. I've represented a wide variety of people throughout my career, including small and mid-sized businesses. I understand how red tape and unreasonable regulations can affect businesses, and intend to bring a practical approach to Congress.

➔ **Please explain what your pro-business priorities would be if elected.** We need universal healthcare for all Americans that is NOT employers based, as that is a huge drag on businesses, especially small and mid-sized. Also, a sick workforce is not productive. We also need to streamline the process of homebuilding, as it takes too long, and is too expensive, to build new homes. I also want to get rid of unnecessary red tape and over-regulation, which is something that I have dealt with directly on behalf of small and mid-sized businesses with the State. There is a place for reasonable regulation, but bureaucracies can sometimes kill business development if they are not responsive to the needs of businesses. I also want to see us do a better job at funding our schools and infrastructure, because we need an educated workforce, as well as world-class infrastructure, if we want to be competitive. I also see a great opportunity to increase vocational job training. Lastly, we need to develop programs that allow for the responsible integration of AI into our economy.

➔ **Reliable, affordable, and diversified electricity supply are critical for national security and economic stability. How would you ensure this is a priority if elected?** We need a different model of electrical generation. Currently, Northwestern Energy and the PSC are not doing a good job at all. We need to move towards a decentralized co-op model throughout Montana that is responsible to businesses and consumers, and that will emphasize the increasing ability of generation of electricity on a local and regional level through renewable production, but still relying on traditional fossil fuel sources (such as coal) when appropriate. I also want to see us explore new forms of energy, such as hydrogen and fusion reactors. I have also heard that traditional small-scale nuclear is safer and more efficient now. I would be open to considering that, but I would want to see the details and understand how the waste is dealt with. We also need to really beef up our transmission and storage capacity, while also respecting local control and the rights of property owners.

MODERNIZING MONTANA'S MOST CONSEQUENTIAL REGULATORY BODY

Affordable and reliable electricity is foundational to a growing economy. Montana has a long history of being an energy exporter and most of that is attributed to our strength as an electricity producer.

Over the last decade, we have seen a steady decline in electricity generation attributed to the retirement of base load generation, largely in coal fired electrical generating stations. While we have seen growth in renewable energy, the investment has not met the pace and scale of baseload generation retirements.

Additionally, electricity demand has grown as our economy has increasingly become electrified. Even setting aside the growth in large load consumers such as data centers, electricity demand is outpacing the supply.

The U.S electrical grid is outdated. New generation is lagging. Demand is increasing. Investment in new generation and related infrastructure is necessary to ensure our homes remain lit and our economy doesn't falter. And the investment necessary to meet the growing demand is in the billions of dollars.

The Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) is the regulatory body that oversees regulated utilities in Montana—evaluating investments, judging what is appropriate, considering long-term and short-term impacts to the stability of the grid, our consumers and the regulated utilities.

In short, the Montana PSC is the elected body that sets the energy investment climate in Montana. It is the elected officials of the PSC that are responsible for determining the fate of investments that will decide whether those dollars will be spent in Montana, or in more favorable business climate states.

And those decisions will determine Montana's economic place for generations to come. Those decisions will decide if Montana moves from an energy exporter to an energy importer subject to the priorities and prices set in other states.

Given the gravity of the electricity supply/demand situation, the complexity of the electricity supply and distribution system, and the massive investments that will be required, it is time Montana moved to a regulatory system that employs relevant experts.

45 other states have an appointed regulatory body--Montana is one of only five that rely on elected officials to evaluate and decide on billion-dollar investments.



To address the electricity crunch Montana and the region is facing, the Montana Chamber is pursuing legislation that will move Montana's PSC from an elected body to an appointed position that requires specific expertise in relevant fields. Finance, engineering, accounting, investment, law, energy production, and economics are among the qualifying backgrounds that should define expertise for the Public Service Commission. Our intent is to remove as much of the "politics" out of this regulatory body as possible. Montana needs relevant business experts free from political influence and posture. Public Service Commission races are among the least understood political contests in our state. Few understand the role and responsibilities of the Public Service Commission. Winning political candidates for the PSC, begin a steep learning curve through on the job training—a curve that can take years to bend.

As we look ahead, acknowledging the challenges we face to meet our growing electricity demand and the massive investment required, it is time to modernize Montana's most consequential regulatory body, the Public Service Commission.

CONSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVE 133



In 2022, Ballot Issue 10 proposed to divide the state of Montana into two states and form the state of East Montana. The same proponent also submitted Ballot Issue 6 to create the two separate states of North Montana and South Montana. That year, two individuals submitted a total of twenty ballot issue concepts for review by multiple state agencies. Every one of these initiative proposals has to go through a process with state agencies to ensure that it meets basic guidelines and basic legislative requirements. Those individuals failed to shepherd their draft ballot issues through the review process required before signature-gathering and never circulated a single petition for signatures.

In response to the abuses of the ballot initiative process, the Montana Chamber of Commerce proposed, lobbied and passed Senate Bill 93 in the 2023 Legislature. SB 93 strengthened the transparency, review and public-comment portion of the initiative process to ensure that frivolous ideas received sufficient scrutiny before signature gathering. SB 93 also created a modest \$3700 filing fee to cover the state employee time required to review a ballot initiative and help the proponent get it ready for signature gathering.

Fast forward to 2026, and out of state anti-business groups have spent nearly \$2 million to support CI-133, which could roll back the Important progress the Chamber has made to bring transparency and fairness to the ballot initiative process.

Montanans cherish our constitutional right to initiative and referendum, but CI-133 complicates our rights with a wordy and unnecessary amendment. CI-133 would undermine representative government and invite abuse of the ballot process. CI-133 imposes rigid timelines, limits review of petitions for legal sufficiency, and restricts the ability of state officials and courts to protect voters from flawed or deceptive measures. While proponents claim it prevents “government interference,” CI-133 actually handcuffs the Attorney General, Secretary of State, and judiciary from performing basic due diligence on behalf of Montanans.

Montana’s Constitution provides citizens a powerful voice through the initiative process. Recent legislative reforms – including fiscal notes, legal reviews, and signature requirements – ensure initiatives are constitutional, transparent, and fiscally responsible. CI-133 would weaken these commonsense protections, making it easier for well-funded special interests, out-of-state groups, and paid signature gatherers to place poorly drafted or conflicting measures on the ballot. The result? Voter confusion, expensive litigation, and potential damage to our Constitution that is difficult to reverse.

Experience in other states shows that loosening safeguards leads to ballot clutter, reduced voter turnout, and policies driven more by money than merit. Montana’s balanced approach serves us better: accountable elected officials combined with careful use of direct democracy.

Not all initiative ideas are good ideas, like proposals to split Montana in half to create two new states. Our process works. Why make it more complicated?

CI-133 is unnecessary. Problems in the process can be addressed through normal legislative and judicial channels without locking inflexible rules into our Constitution. We urge Montanans to reject this measure and preserve a system that protects both the people’s right to petition and the integrity of our government.

BALLOT LANGUAGE FOR CONSTITUTIONAL INITIATIVE NO. 194

The Montana constitution reserves to the people the powers of initiative and referendum. CI-133 amends the constitution to secure this fundamental right from interference by the government. Specifically, CI-133 requires impartial, predictable, open, and timely processes for ballot issues. Petitions and ballot statements must be approved within 90 days of the initial submission, and legal challenges to ballot qualification must be resolved before the deadline for finalizing ballots. CI-133 requires the state to allow ample time for signature gathering, prohibits disqualification of petitions because of minor or technical issues, allows voters to withdraw their signatures if they so choose, and prohibits the use of government resources to support or oppose a ballot measure.

BALLOT INITIATIVE 194

According to the New York Times, 300 individual billionaires spent more than \$3 billion during the 2024 election cycle. Keep those figures in mind as you consider I-194 and its potential impact on Montana values.

The Montana Chamber of Commerce, the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce, and the Billings Chamber of Commerce have taken a clear and united stand against Initiative 194. We believe Montanans deserve a full and transparent explanation of why.

No doubt, I-194 would prohibit Montana businesses and nonprofits from participating in the political process. Under this initiative, family-owned businesses including farms, ranches, restaurants, and retail stores could not respond publicly to a ballot initiative targeting them. A Main Street restaurant could not support a local levy to improve public safety. A small business coalition could not push back against misleading claims that threaten their livelihoods and their employees' jobs. These are not hypothetical concerns; they are the everyday realities of how Montana businesses engage in the civic life of our communities.

But make no mistake, I-194 does not remove big money from our politics. While cleverly named "The Montana Plan", I-194 should be called the "California Plan" since California is home to more than 200 individual billionaires and places no restrictions whatsoever on out-of-state wealthy individuals. Under I-194, a single well-funded outsider could bankroll a campaign to devastate a Montana agricultural practice, a logging operation, or a ranching family, while the Montana businesses under attack would be legally silenced. That is not campaign finance reform. That is a one-sided disarmament of Montana's own voices.

The supporters of I-194 like to reference the Copper King's influence that occurred at the beginning of the 20th century. And while this initiative would have prohibited the Anaconda Copper Company from supporting candidates, the actual individual Kings of copper—the millionaires that owned those companies—would have still been free to bankroll their preferred candidates, while the rest of Montana's small business community sat in silence. They would have loved this proposal.

Montana has a proud history of fighting outside influence in our politics, from the battles against the Copper Kings to the Corrupt Practices Act of 1912. But that Act targeted corruption and covert control of government, not the right of businesses and community organizations to have an open voice in the state they call home. There is a meaningful difference between a corporation secretly buying a legislator and a chamber of commerce publicly advocating for its members.

We raised constitutional and legal questions about I-194's scope before the Montana Supreme Court because those questions deserved an answer. We respect the Court's ruling. And now we are doing exactly what any organization or individual is entitled to do: making our case openly, with our names attached, and letting Montanans decide.

That is what chambers of commerce do. We advocate for Montana's businesses and workers—the coffee shops, hardware stores, family farms, and yes, the larger employers whose presence helps keep smaller businesses alive. We are Montanans representing Montana's economic engine.

We agree that Montanans deserve a political system where their voices matter more than outside money. Silencing Montana businesses while leaving out-of-state billionaires free to spend without restriction does not achieve that goal. It simply changes who gets silenced.

We urge every Montanan to read I-194 carefully—all of it—and ask: Does this make our democracy stronger, or does it make some voices louder by making others disappear?

BALLOT LANGUAGE FOR INITIATIVE NO. 194

A LAW PROPOSED BY INITIATIVE PETITION I-194, if passed, limits the powers of artificial persons to those powers necessary or convenient as provided by law. These powers must exclude contributing anything of value to candidate elections, supporting or opposing political parties, or supporting or opposing state or local ballot issues. Artificial persons include non-profits, trusts, partnerships, corporations, trade associations, or unincorporated associations and includes all such entities doing business in Montana. Any violation of I-194 is punished by forfeiting all privileges to do business in Montana. Those privileges may be, but are not automatically, restored upon disgorgement and certification of compliance with I-194. I-194 does not apply to the distribution of news, commentary, or editorial content. I-194 also does not apply to the state of Montana, political subdivisions, individuals, political committees, or public corporations.



ENVISION

2031

A PLAN FOR MONTANA'S ECONOMIC FUTURE

This is not a single program or initiative. Envision 2031 is a coordinated, statewide economic development strategy designed to strengthen Montana's economy over the next five years.

The Montana Chamber of Commerce's plan builds on decades of success to align policy, strengthen partnerships, and tackle priorities across five key pillars that drive Montana's economy.

THE FIVE PILLARS:

Each pillar is part of an interconnected strategy to support growth, workforce readiness, and economic resilience across Montana.

BUSINESS CLIMATE

ENERGY

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

WORKFORCE & CAREER READINESS

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ENVISION 2031 FOCUSES ON:

- + Long-term impact over short-term wins
- + Bold and meaningful leadership
- + Alignment across systems - not siloed efforts
- + Strategic advocacy
- + Measurable progress and continuous refinement

ENVISION 2031 IS BUILD ON A SIMPLE, POWERFUL APPROACH:

CREDIBILITY

An institutional, trusted voice and leader

ADVOCACY

Advancing policies that promote business growth and economic stability

PARTNERSHIP

Aligning business, education, and government around shared priorities

DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGY

Using research, polling, and economic analysis to guide decisions

ENGAGEMENT

Convening leaders through coalitions, events, and working groups

ACCOUNTABILITY

Tracking progress and refining strategies

BY 2031, MONTANA WILL BE:

- + A top-tier state for business investment and expansion
- + Competitive for emerging industries in technology and other innovative sectors
- + Supported by reliable, affordable energy
- + Aligned across workforce, education, and employer needs

WE'RE BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

Montana's economic momentum is the result of sustained collaboration between business, government, and education.

Envision 2031 builds on that foundation ensuring continued progress in a rapidly changing economic landscape.

For more information on voting and
the 2026 election, please visit the
Montana Secretary of State Website:
WWW.SOSMT.GOV



WE MEAN BUSINESS