



State Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

The Missoula Organization of REALTORS® advocates for REALTORS® and consumers. Our members would like to know your thoughts on priority REALTOR® issues. We thank you for being specific in your responses.

ISSUES

Home prices in Missoula County have increased rapidly since the end of the economic downturn and incomes have not kept up. The median sales price of a home in 2019 was \$315,000, making it challenging for many Missoulian's to buy a home. The rapidly increasing price is due in part to a shortage of housing, particularly in more attainable price ranges. As a state legislator, you will evaluate policies that will impact housing and economic development in Missoula County.

Housing Development

State law broadly outlines the process by which local governments must review subdivisions of land. Subdivision is the primary vehicle for creating lots to be developed into homes for sale. Subdivision review policies attempt to balance communities' housing needs with protecting the environment, agriculture, wildlife habitat, public safety, and other interests. **What changes to Subdivision law do you support to encourage needed development of housing while balancing other community values?**

I would like to see the rules for reviewing and getting waivers be less cumbersome. Affordable housing options should be the goal, driven by the demand from the potential homeowners.

Regulatory reform may be one strategy for promoting housing affordability through state law. **Are there non-regulatory strategies that the legislature should pursue, so please enumerate? If strategies require funding, where should it come from?**

I would support simplifying subdivision rules and keeping regulations to a minimum, so that contractors are not deterred from development in Missoula County. If there are non-regulatory strategies under consideration, I would support them. The cost will ultimately be shared by all and passed on to the consumer.

Tax Law

State Law provides for tax increment financing (TIF) and urban renewal districts. TIF is used within urban renewal districts to combat blight and promote economic development. However, critics of TIF say that these urban renewal districts can be in place for many years, and TIF diverts property tax revenue away from schools and county governments. Supporters respond that TIF grows the property tax base and creates jobs, and that once the urban renewal districts sunset, the taxing jurisdictions have significantly more revenue than they

would have otherwise had. **What changes to TIF statues would you recommend responding citizen complaints and improve the program?**

In my opinion "blight" has been misused in some cases. So blight needs to be more narrowly defined. The duration of these urban renewal districts needs to be clearly set forth, so that they don't become perpetual, and an unnecessary burden to the remaining tax payers.

Property taxes are the primary revenue generator used to fund local government services. Recently increased mil levies multiplied by increasing property value assessments have left many homeowners asking for relief. **What are your thoughts on the current taxation structure for local government? What changes, if any, would you propose/support?**

I would support legislation that would limit the speed with which the assessed value of properties can be increased and also the random assessment increases of whole neighborhoods. I agree with your policy statement that the cost of programs for the public good should be shared more equitably. We all want to see successful schools in our community. Yet we have seen these mil levies combined with increased assessments be a real burden on homeowners.

Economic Development

While the unemployment rate in Montana has been quite low for several years prior to the COVID pandemic, growth in wages has remained relatively stagnant compared to increases in housing costs. **As a state legislator, how would you propose to help grow and attract good paying jobs in Montana and specifically Missoula County?**

I will have to research how to encourage businesses to move to Montana and how to make employing workers easier to do. And I will appose any increase in regulation that makes it more difficult for business owners to thrive and pay their employees well.

Fair Housing

The National Association of REALTORS include sexual orientation and gender identity anti-discrimination language in their code of ethics. Montana does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity. **As a state legislator would you support legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity?**

There is a Federal statute that prohibits discrimination. Would it even be possible to list every type of discrimination, or will we in that attempt end up leaving something else out of the list? In all honesty I believe this is another area that can be over-regulated. I would have to look at the proposed legislation and decide if it was needed.