



State Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate: Ellie Hill, Senate District 45

Experience: Montana House of Representatives 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017

Endorsed by Montana Conservation Voters, AFL-CIO, Carol's List, MEA-MFT, and others...

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?**

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 am an attorney, landlord, and owner of two homes in the University District in Missoula. I am a tireless advocate for home ownership. I support subdivision laws that are easy to understand for the average citizen, and I always support a more streamlined review process. Missoula needs a housing stock that meets market demand in an array of income brackets. Missoula's community growth policies reflect our neighbors' priorities of respect for the environment and well planned developments that incorporate both.

Montana does have a state housing fund dedicated to low income housing development, first sponsored by the former Senator in my Senate District from Missoula, Senator Ron Erickson. I would like to see money finally committed to the housing fund and we can get it from the revenue from the recreational marijuana initiative that will likely pass in November.

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?**

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?**

Missoula leaders continue to work towards better educating our neighbors about the benefits in urban areas to support TIF. I will support any legislation that lowers property taxes to help maintain housing affordability. I always have supported equitable, balanced tax and appraisal structure and responsible government spending.

Costs associated with programs to benefit the whole community should be shared by all members of the community and real estate should not be the sole source of that revenue.

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 have sponsored an array of bills over the last ten years to support economic development in Montana, from raising the caps for microbreweries to bringing Uber to Montana. I am interested in a number of proposals for next session. I am endorsed by all three Missoula County Commissioners, Vero, Strohmaier and Engen, as well as our Mayor John Engen.

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?**

As a state legislator, I have maintained a long commitment to equality and I continue to totally support the prohibition discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.