



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?**

The current subdivision law has been used to restrict the supply and location of where housing construction can occur. I would like to see making the review/rules less expensive, better defined, and easier to access. The housing market should control the supply.

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?**

Less regulation is more. Regulations should be used to assure things are done properly, and to prohibit fraud and abuse.

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?**

The lifetime of TIF projects needs to be reasonably and strictly controlled. Also, unelected boards should not control this process – elected officials must be in control so they can be held accountable by the voters for any abuse, misuse, or pet projects.

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?**

The current tax structure is unfair to homeowners - as the assessed value of their homes increase, they are automatically forced to pay more in taxes. A more fair and equitable solution is for the city/county to adopt a policy called the “Roll Back Rate,” where city and county governments protect their budgets without unnecessarily raising taxes 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 would propose “Tax Holidays” for new businesses moving to Montana/Missoula County, employing 50 or more employees. The duration of the “Tax Holiday” could be adjusted according to the number of people employed.

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?**

I support the Federal Fair Housing Act in its current form, which prohibits this type of discrimination. I am opposed to discrimination of any kind, and believe it is morally and ethically reprehensible.