



# 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 Missoulians 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 support the review of the law and determining what changes might be beneficial. I would not want to purpose change without more in depth study of the law and how it impacts both the state and our local community. I would welcome the opportunity to study this subject more fully, review what areas the legislature could address and to what degree the city and counties are involved and responsible for.

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?**

Housing affordability would be a topic I would be happy to study. Funding options would require working with the finance committee and knowing about the state budget and what impacts the state will be facing. The state is fortunate to have somewhat of a safety net with some of the rainy day funds, but 2021 will provide the state challenges that I don't believe we have yet to realize.

## 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?**

TIF funding was designed to help the communities. At this point it appears that there has been misuse of the funds by some communities that have taken advantage of loop-holes. The community voters have lost their trust in the leaders. I would support review of the state law, how it applies and would welcome clarification and revisions to close loop-holes, ensuring more appropriate use and not misuse of funding.

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?**

Current taxation for local government would be more appropriate for *local officials* to address. I do believe that assessments done every year creates taxation that is difficult for property owners when the property values are so unstable. The return to 4 year assessments would allow for a more average base. However I would believe that I would need to review what part the state would have control of any changes before supporting or proposing changes.

## 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?**

Missoula has great options for businesses to come here. We offer great quality of life, recreation opportunities, hunting, fishing, small town community environments and of course the wonderful BIG SKY country over all. Along with attracting companies with larger paying jobs, comes change that would impact what it is that we have to offer. Finding a middle ground to attract high paying jobs while not losing the opportunities that would bring them to Montana would need compromise and cooperative team work with the Missoula County officials and the state.

### **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?**

Should it be presented to the legislation, I would welcome the opportunity to read it and make a determination.

I can not make a commitment to support legislation on any topic until I have had an opportunity to read and review the actual language proposed for support.