



# 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'm not sure any changes are needed in the subdivision law and would want to carefully consider any proposals to amend this statute. I would welcome hearing the views of the Missoula Organization of Realtors on this issue.

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?**

As housing prices continue to increase and wages for many workers remain relatively stagnant, affordable housing is becoming an increasingly important issue for many Montanans. The 2019 Legislature made a good start in addressing this issue by passing legislation establishing a low interest loan program for prospective home buyers but with interest rates so low I need to know more about the effectiveness of this program. I support providing a housing tax credit for developers that build affordable housing. Projections show that over the next 10 years, tax credits could leverage enough private capital to build 18,000 affordable homes, providing jobs in the process. I place a high value on the opportunity for home ownership and we need strong programs to accomplish this goal. I would look forward to working with MOR on this legislation.

## **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?**

I think TIF has worked well for Missoula and contributed a great deal towards our city's quality of life. Like any program, there is a need for oversight and accountability and if TIF needs fine tuning I would be open to looking at legislative options.

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?**

As a homeowner in Missoula County I feel the burden of high property taxes. At the same time, voters in both the City of Missoula and Missoula County continue to approve bond issues that rely on increased property taxes to build our schools, underwrite our parks and pay for projects like the library. Missoula citizens certainly have a lot to say about the level of property taxes they are willing to pay and I think the role of the legislature is limited.

## **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?**

Even with the pandemic, Missoula continues to grow and many new jobs have come to our community. In part this is due to excellent city and county services, programs like TIF and a high-quality work force. I believe in investing in education to ensure our students are well prepared when they enter the job market. I believe in strong unions to help ensure wages rise and that workers are fairly represented. Protecting our environment and making sure we have access to public lands and waters are essential for our quality of life and for job incubation.

## **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 will oppose legislation that undermines our Montana constitutional prohibitions against discrimination. I will support legislation that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identify.