

MONTANA KAIMIN

All eyes on Montana



The Kaimin voter guide



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Cover photo by Marley Barboeisel

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The Montana Kaimin is a weekly, independent student newspaper at the University of Montana. The Kaimin office and the University of Montana are located on land originally inhabited by the Salish People. Kaimin is a derivative of a Salish language word, "Qe'ymin," that is pronounced kay-MEEN and means "book," "message" or "paper that brings news."

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KAIMIN KOMICS: SE 2 EP 4



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BARRETT

Letter to the Editor

Fifty-two years ago, I was a freshman at the University of Montana and voting in my first presidential election. This milestone in my maturing citizenship was life-changing and has never stopped being an essential part of my identity. It is my hope that all UM students who are eligible to vote have registered to vote on Nov. 5, either here in Missoula County, if this is where they call home, or absentee in their own county.

The candidates and issues on the ballot will have an impact on your life regardless of the election outcome. As a voter, you are able to research and understand what's at stake for you, our state and our nation, and vote accordingly. People who care, vote.

People who don't vote are what? Cynical? Ignorant? Indifferent? Lazy? Fortunately, a university is a great place to get rid of all those attributes. This is the place where political debate and issue advocacy ought to

capture everyone's attention. Elections matter. Your vote matters. Get over whatever it is that is keeping you from voting. Ask for help, there are a lot of folks who want to get you to vote and will answer your questions.

A good place to start is with the nonpartisan League of Women Voters. The League's webpage has a lot of information about elections and citizenship (<https://my.lwv.org/montana/league-women-voters-missoula>). If you are a self-starter, go to www.vote411.org and find information about national and state candidates and issues. You can also check your voter registration status so there are no surprises on Election Day. You can also register to vote there!

I look forward to UM students joining me on Nov. 5 in our basic expression of citizenship: having a say in how we are governed.

— Geoff Badenoch, 1980 Alumn

Register to vote where it matters most

"Are you registered to vote at your current address?" Everyone has probably heard this question at least 20 times in the last year, but the more important question should be, "Do you know which address you are going to register at?"

Your vote matters no matter where you choose to cast it, but because of the way our election system is set up, some votes can have more of an impact than others, and it's up to you to decide where your votes could matter the most.

Ballot initiatives are one of the easiest ways to decide which state or county you want to vote in because they are typically put forth by citizens of a state or county and directly impact specific areas.

The most well-known issue on ballots across the nation this year is abortion, which voters in 10 states will decide on. Abortion is already protected in Montana — among four others — but is restricted or banned in Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota. The proposals would enshrine the right to abortion into each state's constitution.

If initiatives that are important to you are on the ballot in your home state, I encourage you to register there. But it isn't just initiatives that should determine your decision.

Control of the Senate will largely depend on the outcomes of only eight competitive statewide races. Seven of these seats, including Montana's, are currently held by Democrats and could be flipped to Republican, shaking up the Democrats' slim 51 to 49 majority in the chamber. Arizona, Nevada, Pennsylvania and

Wisconsin's seats lean Democrat, Montana and Texas' seats lean Republican and Michigan and Ohio's seats are true tossups.

The results of the Senate election will most likely affect you more than the result of the presidential election. If you're from one of the above states and you'd like to see your vote impact the partisan control of the Senate, I encourage you to register at home. If not, I encourage you to vote in Montana's race, especially if you plan on living here after college.

If you're from a swing state, your vote may be one of only a few hundred thousand that ends up deciding the presidential election. If you're from a deep blue or red state, and it seems like the results of the election are obvious before it's even held, Montana might be the more impactful choice.

With only 26 days left until Election Day, registration deadlines across the country are approaching fast, especially if you wish to vote by mail, so check your state's procedures and requirements for absentee voting to ensure you receive and submit your ballot on time.

Montana requires applicants to be residents of the county they plan to vote in for at least 30 days before Election Day on Nov. 5, so all University of Montana students should be eligible to register in Missoula County.

So whether you vote here or somewhere else, educate yourself, register to vote where it matters most and make the changes you want to see.

Like it? Hate it? Let us know.

Email us your opinions at claire.bernard@umontana.edu

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

9	7	2	1	3	5	4	6	8
6	4	5	8	7	2	9	3	1
8	1	3	9	6	4	2	5	7
1	5	9	7	2	6	3	8	4
4	2	6	3	8	1	7	9	5
7	3	8	4	5	9	6	1	2
2	8	4	6	1	3	5	7	9
5	6	7	2	9	8	1	4	3
3	9	1	5	4	7	8	2	6

6			7					
							5	
			3		1	4	2	
		7			3		1	2
8				9				
	9		6					
				5	2	3		
3		1			9			
2							4	9

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Up with Montana



The University of Montana Grizzlies played the Weber State University Wildcats on Oct. 5 in a pink-out themed game at Washington-Grizzly Stadium. JAMES CELANO | MONTANA KAIMIN

A student guide to voter registration; Missoula College program ranks nationally

VOTER REGISTRATION GUIDE

For many college students, the upcoming Nov. 5 general election will be the first time they're able to vote.

But before you step into the voting booth or sit down with your pen to fill in the bubbles, here's your guide on registering to vote and what you'll see on the ballot this November.

Firstly, you need to meet a couple of key requirements to vote. You have to be a citizen of the United States, at least 18 years old and you have to have been a resident in Montana for at least 30 days. If you don't meet these requirements yet, don't worry! As long as you meet them by Nov. 5, you can still register to vote.

So how do you register to vote? It's too late to mail in a registration form, as they needed to be postmarked and in the mail by Oct. 7. So, you'll need to print and fill out a voter

registration form and turn it into the county elections office. Montana does not currently have online voter registration. You can find the registration form and the form to apply for an absentee ballot on the Montana Voter Information Pamphlet.

In-person registration is available until 8 p.m. on Election Day, Nov. 5. If you plan to register in person, don't forget to bring proof of identification, like your driver's license, state ID or student ID.

Already registered to vote? You can update your information and check your registration status online at the Montana secretary of state's website.

Just in case you haven't seen the ads, there are several key races this year, including the presidential election, the gubernatorial election and the senate race. But there's more than just candidates on the ballot. There are also three ballot initiatives. You can read more in-depth descriptions about the candidate races and the ballot initiatives, including arguments for and against them, in the Montana Voter Information Pamphlet.

If you have questions about voter registration or the general election, you can contact your local county elections office. Phone numbers for each county can be found in the Montana Voter Information Pamphlet. You can reach the Missoula County elections office at (406) 258-4751.

(Elle Daniel)

MISSOULA COLLEGE'S SURGICAL TECH PROGRAM RANKS HIGH NATIONALLY

Nurse.org, a website that supports nurses, has ranked the Missoula College Surgical Technology Program as ninth in the nation due to graduation rate, exam participation, employer satisfaction and tuition costs.

Jill Davis, director of the surgical technology program, told UM News the ranking is a "testament to the hard work and commitment of our students and faculty alike."

Tom Gallagher, dean of Missoula College, also told UM News the program is important as it means having students ready to help with health care in the country after graduating.

"This national ranking highlights the exceptional quality of education we provide at Missoula College," Gallagher said. "Our Surgical Technology program is an example of how we are preparing students to meet the growing needs of the health care industry with skill and professionalism."

This year, enrollment at Missoula College decreased by 2.7%, with the student body

totaling 1,397 students. However, first-time entering freshmen at Missoula College increased 15% from last fall.

Katie Gieger, clinical coordinator, told UM News Missoula College had 10 students enroll in the surgical tech program this year, and they have been "responding positively to the program's work-based environment."

The program is two years long and the deadline to enroll was Oct. 1.

(Claire Bernard)

Listen to Chandler Lieb on the Kaimin Cast



Deep in the mountains south of Missoula at the Blue Mountain Observatory, astronomers from the University of Montana are exploring space in our solar system and beyond. For one of these observers, finding their place atop Blue Mountain took a lifetime of experiences.

"What's really cool about the observatory versus the planetarium is you get to see all this stuff with your own eyes," Jake Fischer, Blue Mountain Observatory presenter, said. "It's not a picture off the internet. You're not looking at your friend's phone, you're actually getting to see these objects."



New episodes out to every other Monday. Scan for the latest.

POLICE BLOTTER

ABBY WILLIAMS

abby1.williams@umontana.edu

The looming threat of midterms must be causing you all to act out. Forgetting backpacks, crashing into cars and taking packages are not the study tips we should be utilizing. If your anxiety skyrockets, try going for a walk, listening to music or going for a bike ride ... but not on a stolen one, of course.

OCT. 1 – PERMANENTLY BANNED

At around 6:20 p.m. in the University Center, a non-student threatened violence toward a staff member. The person left before the University of Montana Police Department arrived, but was quickly found and arrested. The person has been banned from the University of Montana campus. Student workers don't need threats toward them, working here is already hard enough.

OCT. 2 – ONE MORE LOOK

At 10:30 p.m. outside the Health Sciences buildings, a backpack with a computer and other personal items was stolen. Officers searched the building, but didn't find anything. The student called back later, saying they had found the backpack. Sometimes taking one extra look around may be worth your time. It would certainly minimize the anxiety.

OCT. 3 – NAME SWAP

A package was reported stolen at Miller Hall at 6 p.m. The package was delivered to Miller and appeared to be found and delivered to the rightful owner later. Treat it like the airport baggage claim and double check the name and addresses on all packages. You don't want someone else's private package, or emotional baggage, do you?

OCT. 3 – ANOTHER ONE

A bike was stolen from the racks by Miller Hall around 9 p.m. The owner of the bike said it was stolen sometime before 8 p.m. There are currently no suspects. Come on guys, bike thefts are getting old. Is Free Cycles not up to par anymore?

OCT. 4 – QUIET LITTLE ACCIDENT

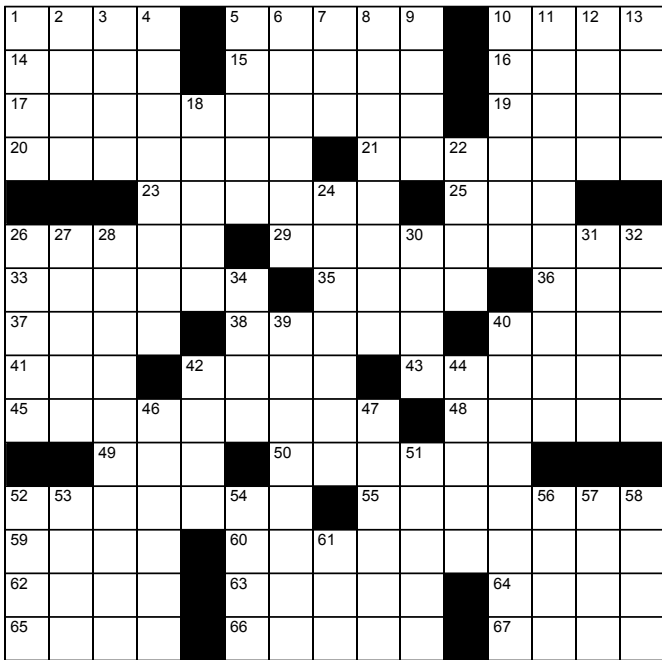
A witness saw someone leaving the scene of a fender bender at Lot C on Friday. The other car had minor damage and there are no current suspects. How about this: instead of keeping spare change or empty soda cans in our car cup holders, how about we keep a pad of paper and some pens instead? You know, so we can be kind and courteous and leave our contact information when we crash into a car?

2024 ASUM STUDENT POLITICAL PRIORITY SURVEY

Share your priorities with us so we can lobby for YOU during the legislative session!

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

SCAN HERE



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- ACROSS**
- 1 Neuter a neiger
 - 5 Clip, as wool
 - 10 Airport lineup
 - 14 Mishmash
 - 15 Way off base?
 - 16 Light greenish-blue
 - 17 Part of AP
 - 19 Pipe problem
 - 20 Take away
 - 21 Overly optimistic
 - 23 Treadmill settings
 - 25 Skirt's edge
 - 26 Kind of test
 - 29 Stress, in a way
 - 33 Different ones
 - 35 Nixon's pardoner
 - 36 Potter pal
 - 37 Weasley
 - 38 Straddling
 - 38 Offer one's two cents
 - 40 Pub order
 - 41 Quick swim
 - 42 Tehran's land
 - 43 One on the payroll
 - 45 Dispersed
 - 48 Rundown
 - 49 Color shade
 - 50 Conforms (to)
 - 52 One of Marvel's Avengers
 - 55 Stew ingredient
 - 59 Poker play
 - 60 Meet half-way
 - 62 Weather word
 - 63 Library listing
 - 64 Tolstoy heroine
 - 65 Village People classic
 - 66 Pitcher's stat
- DOWN**
- 1 Spur
 - 2 Besides
 - 3 Shopper's aid
 - 4 Place for a welcome mat
 - 5 Pizza serving
 - 6 Fastball, in slang
 - 7 Absorb, as a cost
 - 8 Strong dislike
 - 9 Modernize, as decor
 - 10 College grad's goal
 - 11 March birthstone
 - 12 Go over 21, in blackjack
 - 13 Apt anagram for "eats"
 - 18 Escapade
 - 22 Shake off
 - 24 Clearly set out
 - 26 Warty creatures
 - 67 Trawling gear
- Answers to Previous Crossword:**
- | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | A | S | T | P | L | E | A | D | P | I | E | S |
| O | N | T | O | L | I | N | D | A | O | N | C | E |
| L | I | E | U | A | D | D | O | N | O | S | H | A |
| O | S | P | R | E | Y | U | L | T | E | R | I | O |
| R | E | S | I | S | T | S | E | E | M | E | D | |
| | | | S | L | I | C | E | S | B | R | I | A |
| S | O | F | T | M | A | R | C | I | E | O | N | E |
| W | H | I | S | P | E | R | E | N | R | O | U | T |
| A | I | R | A | S | C | E | N | T | U | S | E | D |
| P | O | S | T | S | I | N | T | E | N | T | | |
| P | E | N | T | A | G | O | N | S | N | O | R | R |
| O | V | A | L | A | G | A | V | E | A | M | E | N |
| L | A | M | E | P | E | R | I | L | C | I | A | O |
| O | L | E | S | E | N | E | M | Y | H | E | L | D |

Horoscope

Fall nostalgia-o-scope

KAIRI LISING
kairi.lising@umontana.edu

The leaves are turning yellow and the air has a chill to it ... you know what time it is. In this annual era of change, it's a good time to stop and think about better times, back when you had no responsibilities. Things were good, you were happy. And now? You have student debt. Yay! Look to the stars to find the best way to cling to the nostalgic joy of your youth.

LIBRA (SEPT. 23 - OCT. 22): After running away from your problems for the millionth time, Libra, you begin to miss the escapism of watching "Goosebumps" on a box TV. You loved the fuzzy, bad quality episodes. Right before you got to the good part, your mom always called you for dinner. At least she can't interrupt you now if you binge some episodes on Netflix.

SCORPIO (OCT. 23 - NOV. 21): It's so hard being so cool, Scorpio. If only you could be a kid again and your teacher would teach you how to make hand turkeys. You always got marker on the sides of your hands from tracing it. Now, all you do is smoke cigarettes and call your mom by her first name. Yikes. **SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22 - DEC. 21):** You pull up the streaming menu on your TV, Sagittarius, and are once again burdened with the choice of what you're going to watch today. It used to be so easy when you were a kid and your parents would take you to Hastings (R.I.P.) to pick out a movie. You'd always sneak peeks at the horror section before being guided to the kids' section. "Halloweentown" it is!

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22 - JAN. 19): You're the most adult of all adults, Capricorn. You're so adult that when you and your elementary friends would go to the corn maze, they would all look to you to get them out. None of them thought to look at the map? Well, now all those same friends are fine arts majors and you're in pre-law, so I guess it checks out. Maybe don't bring them along with you this time?

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20 - FEB. 18): You're a lone wolf. You walk these halls alone and you're okay with that. As you walk, a flier for a haunted house catches your eye. When you were a kid, you loved them. You'd beg your parents to take you to them, saying you wouldn't be scared, even though when they'd finally let you go, you'd inevitably hide your face in their arms every step of the way. Remember, Aquarius, it's your money now, so no running away this time.

PISCES (FEB. 19 - MARCH 20): You miss the time of the year when all your classmates' parents would get together and throw a Halloween party at your elementary school. It was perfect: the music, the goodie bags, the plastic tablecloth you'd rip holes in with your fingers. These formative memories really developed your taste for candy corn, Pisces. You should probably go get some, even if you'll only finish half the bag.

ARIES (MARCH 21 - APRIL 19): You've been so stressed this semester, Aries, taking way too many credits for your double major. Seek comfort in crunching fallen leaves on your way to class. It'll make you think of those days you'd rake the leaves into a pile and jump into them.

TAURUS (APRIL 20 - MAY 20): After smoking your fourth bowl today, Taurus, you'll sit back and realize how hungry you are. Not hungry for just anything, though. You're craving the pumpkin pie your mom would serve every fall, always served cold with a heaping pile of whipped cream. Good thing for you: The secret ingredient is that it's store-bought.

GEMINI (MAY 21 - JUNE 20): Before you knew it, Gemini, spooky season showed up. You've been so busy being friends with everybody that you haven't had time to get your costume. Relive the joy you felt when your parents took you Halloween shopping by heading to the nearest Spirit Halloween and buying yourself the scratchiest, itchiest, most expensive costume you can find.

CANCER (JUNE 21 - JULY 22): After making yourself sit through a horror movie your friends wanted to watch, Cancer, you get home emotionally exhausted and paranoid as fuck. You look around every corner searching for monsters, just like when you were a kid. If only you could call your dad to come tuck you in. Hopefully, he won't mind when you call him in a panic at 3 a.m.

LEO (JULY 23 - AUG. 22): It's starting to get cold again, Leo. You know what that means? Cute autumn outfits and yearning for that one nostalgic fall drink. You know the one, the apple cider that comes in a packet that was always too hot to drink. It always tasted like hot apple juice, but you should microwave some up in your dorm room anyway.

VIRGO (AUG. 23 - SEPT. 22): You're efficient, Virgo. You know what you want. Your planner is color-coded and alphabetical. You miss the soup that would simmer in the crockpot when you got home from school. But you can't have it now because it's gotta taste EXACTLY the same. Might as well settle for whatever soup is at The Lodge instead.



BARRETT CLEMENT | MONTANA KAIMIN

UM paleontology collections manager wants you to dig deeper

KATE WIDMER

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If you walk into the east wing of the Clapp Building, you'll be greeted by a slack-jawed replica of the skull of Peck's Rex, the most complete *Tyrannosaurus rex* skeleton ever discovered, staring back at you.

Originally recovered near Fort Peck, Montana, in 1977, the skull has eye sockets as big as basketballs, banana-sized curved teeth and scarring on its upper jaw that's almost reminiscent of a Glasgow smile, all contained in a display case that's 50 inches tall. It leaves quite the impression, and it's available for viewing to anyone who feels like making the walk.

The Peck's Rex skull replica is kept in the Clapp Building's basement under the care of Kallie Moore, who's been University of Montana's paleontology collections manager since 2008. Alongside the skull are over 40,000 more specimens from across 20 different countries and spanning centuries.

A collections manager is somebody who preserves and conserves fossils. In Moore's words, it's "just like [what] a book librarian does for books, putting the little number on them, having a catalog that corresponds with that little number, making sure everything is safe and available for people that would like to see it. That's what I do."

Originally from Kansas City, Kansas, Moore developed an interest in fossils from exploring her paleo-hobbyist dad's fossil collection and watching movies such as "The Land Before Time." She landed the job at UM as part of a mock application assignment during her last semester at Emporia State University, where she graduated with a degree in earth sciences and a minor in paleontology.

"I applied, and shockingly, I was hired," Moore said. "I say shockingly because I hadn't actually graduated with my undergrad yet."

In the same week Moore had her interview, she finished her finals and graduated, then drove up to Missoula within the month to begin her work as collections manager.

In addition to her work as collections manager, Moore is also one of the major forces behind "PBS Eons," a YouTube-based web series that takes viewers through various stages of Earth and the evolution of life, which covers the history of humans and plants just as much as it does dinosaurs and other animals. It hit 3 million subscribers last week.

"Not only do I host on Eons, but I fact-check every written word we have," Moore

said.

"Eons" also produces podcasts and short-form content for YouTube shorts and TikTok, in addition to developing a number of upcoming projects that will be revealed later this year, all of which Moore is a part of.

Moore also co-executive produced the recent documentary "Why Dinosaurs," a collaborative effort between Tony and James Pinto, a father-son duo from Simi Valley, California, that explores the history of our understanding of dinosaurs, as well as the people who devote their lives to the scientific study of paleontology. Screenings of the documentary have taken Moore everywhere, from Ekalaka, Montana, to Los Angeles, where it had a Hollywood premiere.

As Moore moves her outreach efforts away from science communication for kids, which she spent 10 years doing, and more toward lectures for an adult audience, she's been enjoying giving more detail about the lives of prehistoric creatures.

"Not to say that adults have better questions or anything like that," Moore said. "It's just [that] they're a little bit quieter and I can talk at a higher level."

Moore is even planning a lecture about dinosaur sexual behaviors at the Missoula Public Library later this year. It's open to the public for individuals over 18.

To develop an interest in a fossil-hunting hobby, a background as an official scientist is not required, she said.

"Amateurs are definitely a backbone of paleontology," Moore said. "Being aware of fossils, knowing what types of fossils are [found where] ... having kind of a general understanding of deep time and geologic time. Just having that kind of baseline knowledge already makes you like a professional amateur, in my mind."

With all these accomplishments and more from this past year, Moore might be crazy busy, but she's enjoying every second.

"I have checked so many boxes off of my paleo bucket list this year," Moore said.

Oh, and for those who may be wondering, her favorite dinosaur is the triceratops.

"I always find triceratops bones," Moore said. "That's why they're my favorite."

Anyone who's interested in looking at the online collections database or touring UM's paleontology collection can find links here: <https://www.umt.edu/paleontology/default.php> Moore's talk at the library can be found on the its website.



Collections manager for the UM Paleontology Center, Kallie Moore, looks at a fossilized tooth that may have belonged to a rat on Oct. 15, 2013. **STACY THACKER | MONTANA KAIMIN**

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JON TESTER FOR U.S. SENATE

All eyes on Montana

By Claire Bernard

This year, the state of Montana has been thrown into the middle of political races that involve the University of Montana and its students more than you might think.

From the ads that pop up while you're trying to watch the Mormon moms TikTok show to the fliers filling your mailboxes in between your Amazon packages, one thing is clear: Nationally and statewide, candidates want the student vote.

This year, we've had visits from both pro-life and pro-choice advocates, including that giant inflatable IUD we all

woke up to one day. We've seen Name, Image and Likeness deals offered to UM athletes to endorse Sen. Jon Tester. Last week, our small mountain campus even saw Charlie Kirk, conservative media sensation, hold a rally with Republican Senate candidate Tim Sheehy to push votes.

It's well-known that young people are much less likely to vote, but in one of the most volatile election seasons most of us have seen, candidates from every party are doing what they can to win, including engaging with a bunch of college kids.

Sure, there's a spicy presidential election amidst conflicts

in the Middle East, record inflation and a housing crisis, but the Republican and Democratic parties are counting on Montanan voters' Senate decision as well. Montana, among others, could swing the Senate to a Republican or Democratic majority, determining how the legislature will likely vote in the next two years.

Ballots were sent out this week, so what will you do when you receive yours? Whether you're undecided on candidates or already know what you want to do and are itching to learn even more, read ahead so when you make your way down the ballot, you can make your choice with intent.

Codifying abortion and changes to voting hit ballots

By Aislin Tweedy

Two years after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, Montanans will vote on whether to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution.

Constitutional Initiative 128, advanced by a group called Montanans Securing Reproductive Rights, would create a new section of the Montana Constitution establishing "a right to make and carry out decisions about one's own pregnancy, including the right to abortion." The initiative would allow the government to regulate abortion after fetal viability, the point where the fetus could survive outside the womb, except in cases when the mother's health is at risk.

In 1999, the Montana Supreme Court ruled in *Armstrong v. State of Montana* that an individual's right to privacy under the Montana Constitution provides the right to "procreative autonomy," including the right to the pre-viability abortion of a pregnancy.

Akilah Deernose is the executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Montana, a group supporting the initiative. Deernose said after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, efforts to restrict access to abortion cropped up around the country. During the 2023 legislative session, Montana lawmakers attempted to pass dozens of bills curtailing abortion access.

"In order to protect Montana's

abortion rights, we wanted to get this abortion measure on the ballot so that Montanans could have a say and enshrine our existing protections into the constitution," Deernose said.

Matthew Brower, executive director of the Montana Catholic Conference, opposes CI-128. He argued enshrining a Montana Supreme Court decision into the state constitution would set a dangerously broad precedent.

"It takes what *Armstrong* has provided and places it into the constitution, rather than relying solely on a Supreme Court decision," Brower said. "We must consider the standard of judicial review that this constitutional amendment would introduce — not only for pre-viability

abortion rights but also for post-viability scenarios."

Throughout the campaign for CI-128, proponents have claimed it would safeguard Montanans' privacy and reproductive rights in "unthinkable situations," such as cases of rape, incest, or when a woman's life is at risk.

If passed, Brower said it would be virtually impossible to craft any effective legislation around abortion. He said he is not addressing situations where the health or life of the mother is at risk, but rather the issue of unrestricted late-term abortion.

Jessi Bennion, a professor of political science at Montana State University, said the initiative is likely more about politics than

anything else.

According to Bennion, states with abortion initiatives are popular with the Democratic Party because they mobilize a certain kind of voter that Democratic candidates, such as Sen. Jon Tester, need to win elections.

"Abortion rights are already in Montana; it just now [would be] codified explicitly into the Constitution. So that's the change this initiative would make," Bennion said. "I think it was a brilliant strategy and a popular initiative."

She noted abortion rights are a rare issue that draws support from across traditional partisan divides. Montana is one of ten states with abortion rights on the ballot in this year's election.

By Nicole Service

Montana voters will get a chance to change how elections are run in a way supporters hope will benefit more moderate candidates.

These changes are included in two separate constitutional amendments, CI-126 and CI-127, on this fall's ballot.

CI-126 would amend the Montana Constitution to change the voting process to a "top four" primary election. All candidates, regardless of political party, would appear on the primary ballot and the top four would advance.

Currently, Montana uses party-specific primaries to nominate

candidates from their political party. Registered Republican voters vote only in the Republican primary, and the same for Democrats. Independent voters do not get to vote in a primary.

CI-126 would allow all voters to select their top candidate — the top four would advance to the general election.

The second initiative, CI-127, would amend Montana's constitution to require that in state elections, candidates would have to receive more than 50% of votes to win. Currently, Montana works on a plurality system — whoever gets the most votes wins, even when the winner polls under 50%

of votes.

CI-127, supporters said, would better represent Montanans' votes more accurately and encourage people to vote.

Montana State University political science professor Jessi Bennion said the initiative would help decrease polarization in an increasingly heated political environment.

"As a political scientist, I am looking for ways to decrease polarization to get more what I would call non-extreme candidates elected. And I also think that open primaries generally allow people to have more choice," she said.

But others worry the changes could have negative effects on the process.

Shirley Miller, a local Republican committeewoman in Jefferson County, submitted op-eds to several papers expressing her concerns if CI-126 is passed, writing it would weaken political parties and give more power to less accountable advocacy organizations.

"It ... means more special interest groups fighting for voters' attention, likely leading to more polarized campaigns," she wrote. "CI-126 represents a radical experiment that would make political campaigns more dependent on

special interest money and keep accountable for the average voter."

One survey from Pew Charitable Trust found only 4% of voters said they thought the current system was working extremely or very well.

While Montanans have organized and canvassed to get the measures on the ballot this year, the vast majority of the funds supporting the initiatives have come from two out-of-state political organizations — Article IV and Unite America PAC. These organizations have advocated for electoral changes in numerous states and have supplied \$4.3 million to support the initiatives.

The Kaimin voter guide

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The big one: The 2024 Senate race

By Clayton Elmore

On a sunny September afternoon in Butte, Democratic Sen. Jon Tester stood in a small room and rallied a group of volunteers by casting his opponent, Republican businessman and former Navy SEAL Tim Sheehy, as a wealthy transplant out of touch with local values.

“He doesn’t know Montana, and that’s the problem,” Tester told the crowd. “He doesn’t know Butte, America, and that’s the problem. He doesn’t know the labor movement started here, and that’s the problem. He doesn’t understand people had to work their butts off to support their families here. That’s the problem.”

For Tester, who is vying for a fourth term in the Senate, the problem may be that the electorate has changed since he was first elected in 2006. Today, the average Montana voter is more partisan, motivated by broader culture wars and national issues like immigration and the economy.

“I used to always call Tester the unicorn candidate,” said Jessi Bennion, a professor of political science at Montana State University. “He was a farmer. He was a rural Democrat. He was just really unique.”

Bennion said Tester owes his unlikely political success to his boots-on-the-ground Montana credentials: When he’s not in Washington, D.C., he’s often on a tractor, tending to his wheat fields in Big Sandy. But as Montana’s political landscape shifts, it’s no longer clear his folksy roots as a third-generation dirt farmer will garner him enough votes to beat Sheehy, a Minnesota-born businessman who is endorsed by former President Donald Trump. A September poll by AARP showed Sheehy



CONTRIBUTED | TIM SHEEHY FOR MONTANA



CONTRIBUTED | MONTANAS FOR TESTER

leading Tester by six percentage points with a margin of error of 4%. Among voters older than 50, that lead jumps to 17%.

“Montana is clearly a red state,” Bennion said. “We can’t say anymore that it’s a purple state. Tester is the lone Democrat.”

Control of the U.S. Senate next year could well depend on which of these candidates — Sheehy or

Tester — can convince voters that they’re more representative of Montana than the other. It’s one of the most closely watched and expensive races in the country. For months now, voters have endured seemingly endless attack ads on TV, radio, online and in their mailbox, hitting on issues such as health care, abortion, immigration and public lands.

At a recent campaign event in

Kalispell, Sheehy accused Tester of being a political sellout toeing the Democratic party line in Washington, D.C.

“He has an ad campaign funded by hundreds of millions of dollars of out-of-state dark money, flowing in to keep somebody in place that votes for their own interests every single day,” Sheehy said. “They are literally supporting a candidate that when he goes to D.C., votes with Biden ... every single time it matters.”

Tester has voted with Biden 91% of the time, according to the polling organization FiveThirtyEight.

In 2010, Tester voted for President Barack Obama’s Affordable Care Act, which he told CNN this March he’s open to improving or replacing if a new law can increase access and affordability. Sheehy has criticized the Affordable Care Act, arguing it has contributed to inflation and led to higher premiums for Montanans. He advocates alternatives that rely on private market competition.

The candidates have also sparred over housing. Sheehy has said Montana should use local lumber to build its way out of the housing crisis. “We must start taking advantage of our abundant natural resources and building more homes with Montana timber,” he said in an email. “In the middle of a housing crisis, why are we buying our timber and shipping it in from foreign countries when we could be getting it for cheaper?”

Tester plans to address the crisis by steering federal dollars toward housing and community development projects. He points to his work on the Senate Appropriations Committee, where he’s secured more than \$22 million since 2019 to help bolster Montana’s housing supply. He’s advocating for other bills in Congress that would add more rural

affordable housing in Montana.

Tester, 68, was born in Havre, Montana near the land his grandfather homesteaded in 1916. He got a bachelor’s degree in music at the University of Great Falls in 1978 and briefly taught music in the Big Sandy School District before taking over the family farm and butcher shop. In 1998, he was elected to the Montana Senate. He became president of that body in 2005. Tester narrowly defeated Republican Conrad Burns to win his U.S. Senate seat in 2006. Montana’s senior senator, Tester is the state’s only Democrat in both houses of Congress.

Sheehy, 37, grew up just north of St. Paul, Minnesota and attended a private high school. He graduated at the top of his class in the U.S. Naval Academy and the Army Ranger School. As a Navy SEAL, he deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, South America and the Pacific region and was the recipient of a Bronze Star and a Purple Heart. He was “medically separated” from the military in 2014 and founded Bridger Aerospace, an aerial firefighting company in Bozeman.

Bennion said the Senate race illustrates the shift away from local politics.

“Everything is nationalized now,” she said. “One of the clearest trends that people are going to talk about is what is happening at the national level.”

That may explain why Sheehy is seeking to tie Tester to President Joe Biden and his perceived failures at the U.S.-Mexico border 1,300 miles from Montana. It may also explain why Tester hasn’t endorsed Kamala Harris.

“As a Democrat in Montana, you absolutely have to convince Republicans to vote for you,” Bennion said. “Otherwise, you cannot win.”

The race for governor: An uphill battle for Democrats

By Claire Bernard and Clayton Murphy

Montana's Republican Gov. Greg Gianforte is running for his second term against a political first-timer, Democrat Ryan Busse, in a race that is leaning heavily in the Republican's favor, according to polling and political scientists.

Gianforte's campaign has adopted an aura of inevitability. The Republican is spending roughly half of what Busse is on his campaign. He isn't organizing big rallies or seeking out press, and only reluctantly agreed to a debate in mid-October, after mail-in voting is already underway.

Busse has campaigned at nearly 150 events, from backyard socials to rallies.

Jessi Bennion, professor of political science at Montana State University, said slow-footing works to Gianforte's advantage.

"Most voters are like, 'This guy is a Republican. I'm generally doing well. I agree with the Republican identity and philosophy so I'm going to vote for him,'" she said.

Without the ticket-splitting electorate that pushed former Democratic governors into office, Busse is doing everything he can to appeal to voters. He hasn't endorsed Kamala Harris. His ads often feature pictures of him hunting and he regularly reminds voters of his background.

"I tell those stories because I want conservative voters to know I'm not this 'boogeyman Democrat' you've been warned about on Fox News," Busse said. "I'm a gun owner. I'm a hunter. I speak plainly. I grew up in a John Deere tractor."

Gianforte's campaign declined to make him available for an interview, but spokesperson Anna Marian Block said Gianforte has made Montana a better place to "achieve the American Dream."

"Under Governor Gianforte's leadership, more Montanans are working now than ever before, hardworking taxpayers received the largest tax cuts in state history, the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners were defended and hundreds of thousands of acres were unlocked for public access," Block wrote.

Gianforte, 63, was born in San Diego, California. He moved to Bozeman in 1995, where he and his wife co-founded RightNow Technologies, a cloud-based customer service provider. When the company sold to the Oracle Corporation in 2011, it was worth \$1.5 billion.

Busse also moved to Montana in 1995 after he and a friend opened a sales office for firearms company Kimber Manufacturing. In over 25 years with the company, he grew disillusioned with the industry.

In 2020, Busse left Kimber and

published a memoir, "Gunfight," in which he spoke out against the radicalization of gun culture. The book sparked outrage

among the National Rifle Association and much of his social circle.

"I couldn't take the hundreds of people who knew better and were looking away," Busse said.

Busse said he decided to run for office when he became alarmed with Gianforte's decisions as governor. A September poll from AARP found Busse trailing Gianforte by 16 points.

Unlike most Montana Democrats, state Republicans have focused on national GOP calling cards like border security and tax cuts. In April, Gianforte sent 10 members of the Montana National Guard to Texas to spend a month helping secure the U.S.-Mexico border. Busse, however, has condemned Gianforte's attention in national issues.

"It's weird to me that Gianforte has so much time on his hands he can focus on all these national political issues," Busse said. "Need I remind you: you are the governor of this state?"



Greg Gianforte

CONTRIBUTED | GREG FOR MONTANA

Gianforte has found political success in cutting taxes — a main promise in both his 2020 and 2024 campaigns. Last year, Gianforte cut over \$1 billion in taxes statewide, the biggest tax relief in state history, according to Block.

But rising property taxes are one of Gianforte's biggest vulnerabilities — and one of Busse's most frequent talking points.

In Nov. 2022, Gianforte and the state legislature ignored warnings to reduce the residential tax rate from 1.35% to 0.94% because of rising housing prices. Many Montanans' property taxes rose dramatically.

But Bennion said the governor's playbook of lowering income tax is complicated by the fact that Montana only has two kinds of taxes: income and property.

"When you lower income taxes, then there's only one kind of tax that can make up for that," Bennion said. Still, she doesn't think the decision is having a major negative impact on



Ryan Busse

CONTRIBUTED | MARLEY BARBOEISEL

voters.

While Busse distances himself from some national Democratic issues, he remains adamant about a few, including the expansion of healthcare and abortion access. He is vocal in his support of public land access and public education.

But Jeremy Johnson, associate professor of political science at Carroll College, said Gianforte has reason to feel confident going into this election.

That confidence, Johnson said, may explain why he's keeping his head down, hoping this year's presidential election will bring out enough Republican voters to guarantee him another four years in office.

Bozeman attorney seeks to upset sitting attorney general

By Chandler Lieb

Ask Bozeman attorney Ben Alke what prompted him to launch his long-shot campaign to unseat Attorney General Austin Knudsen and he is quick to rattle off stories of what he sees as partisan overreaching by Knudsen.

Knudsen, who declined comment, has said he stands by the work he has overseen as the top law enforcement officer in the state.

"We've done some really exciting things," Knudsen told MTN News when he announced his 2024 campaign. "We're pushing back really hard on fentanyl, on meth-

amphetamine — and we're making good headway, and I want to keep moving in that direction."

Alke argues the attorney general has used his office for partisan fights.

Alke said in an interview he sees himself as being more of a centrist rather than a Democrat.

"It's your job to uphold the rights of the Montana Constitution and to uphold the law. You cannot allow for other criteria to affect your decision-making," Alke said. "You don't do the job differently, whether you're a Republican or a Democrat."

Jeremy Johnson, political science

professor at Carroll College, said Alke's only avenue to election is to run as more of a centrist.

"And it's worked for Democratic candidates in the past. It's a little harder to work now. I just think the number of true ticket splitters has shrunk. And it makes it harder to move people away from the Republican line, especially when you're not that well known," Johnson said.

Republicans have held the office since 2013, but Alke argues Knudsen has injected politics into the office in a new way.

"You cannot allow for other criteria to affect your decision-making and several of the things he's done are not appropriate for any lawyer to do, much less the attorney general," Alke said.

But Knudsen has publicly countered that his work is in the interest of the state, even when it lands the state in court. Knudsen claimed credit for helping a law banning TikTok in Montana get passed and signed by the governor, making it the first state to do so.

Knudsen hails from the northeast part of the state, having served eight years as a legislator from Culbertson and two years as Roosevelt County attorney before being elected attorney general in 2020 with 59% of the vote.

Alke grew up in Helena but headed to University of Notre Dame for undergrad and Chicago for law school, before moving to Bozeman to work as a litigator. Despite the odds, Alke is hopeful his campaign has a chance of winning in a state he believes to still be more centrist.

Chief justice race sees conflicting ideas of the high court

By Emma White

Neither candidate for Chief Justice of the Montana Supreme Court thought they were destined for the state's highest court.

Instead, Cory Swanson and Jerry Lynch both say they decided to run because they saw the need for a candidate who offered a different judicial philosophy.

The campaign has come to symbolize the state of the judiciary in Montana — some see it as a vital, independent branch that is under assault from the legislative and executive branches, while others see it as an activist group undermining the work of elected officials in the state.

For Broadwater County Attorney Corey Swanson, this means he wants to change the court to be less “activist” than it has been.

Swanson, 47, grew up in Montana and earned his law degree from the University of Montana. He is also a colonel in the National Guard with 27 years of service.

“I have pretty extensive experience leading large organizations in the military,” Swanson said, “and the leadership function of the Chief Justice requires a lot of work with a lot of people, and it requires not ordering them around, but really cooperation and convincing them to work together towards common

good.”

After law school, Swanson became a partner in a law firm, deputy attorney general to Tim Fox, and eventually prosecutor for Broadwater County, where he has remained for 10 years. He decided to enter the race after feeling dissatisfied with the platforms of the candidates.

“I didn’t hear from their rhetoric, anyone that was focused on ... what I think is the kind of stable, fundamental way of doing appellate judging, which is what the Supreme Court’s for,” Swanson said.

Lynch’s concern that the judiciary has found itself under political attack from conservative lawmakers in the legislature and the executive branch spurred him to enter the race.

“When I decided to run for the Supreme Court, I had a passion about defending the judiciary,” Lynch said in a candidate forum in Missoula on Sept. 12. “I retired as a federal judge, but the nonsense and the attack on the judiciary is something I just ... I couldn’t just sit idly by.”

Lynch, 72, grew up in Butte, Montana, and got a master’s degree from Montana State University in zoology and genetics. He then earned a law degree from the University of Montana and entered private practice in Great Falls, Montana, where he worked as a trial attorney.

“I am so proud of the years I spent as a trial attorney,” Lynch said. “There’s always someone bigger than your business, and when you get in a fight with the bully, you need someone to protect you.”

Lynch was then appointed a federal magistrate judge, where he served for 15 years. He is quick to note he was appointed by both Democratic and Republican presidents, saying it showcases his ability to reach across the aisle.

Political analysts said Lynch’s campaign is built around defending the judiciary from political attack.

“That’s certainly an argument that can be made in the Trump era,” said Jeremy Johnson, a political science professor at Carroll College.

Lynch also emphasizes his support for the Montana constitution in his campaign, like the right to privacy, a healthy environment and a quality education. The American Civil Liberties Union of Montana sent a mailer highlighting Lynch’s record and his support for abortion rights.

He added he has no complaint with the current workings of the Montana Supreme Court, which he views as a moderate court.

It’s a position that has drawn support from many top lawyers in the state, including former



CONTRIBUTED | EMMA WHITE

Montana Supreme Court Associate Justice Pat Cotter, who served from 2000 to 2016.

“We’re going to need a steady hand for chief justice,” Cotter said at a Helena event for Lynch, “and Jerry Lynch is that steady hand.”

Swanson believes the high court should be more connected to what is happening across the state, saying he wants to improve communications between district courts and the Montana Supreme Court, as well as administrative improvements such as enhanced courtroom security and increasing the number of oral arguments that the court hears per year.

He also stressed the need for more consistency in the court.

“I think there’s been some less predictability in the law than I’d like,” Swanson said.

Broadwater County Sheriff Nick Rauser, supporting Swanson, said he welcomes what he said would be a new perspective.

“I don’t know whether the other members of the Supreme Court know what we deal with on a regu-



CONTRIBUTED | SWANSON FOR JUSTICE

lar basis,” Rauser said. Swanson has also drawn the support of the Montana Chamber of Commerce, which said it felt he would help represent the interests of businesses.

Swanson said his goal is to “take politics out of the equation,” by emphasizing apolitical judging and a stable, consistent judiciary.

Although these two candidates are running as nonpartisans for the Supreme Court, Carroll Professor Jeremy Johnson noted their campaigns echo how Democrats and Republicans are talking about the courts.

“The Democrats’ point is that the institutions or judiciary, and presumably democracy, could be under a threat,” Johnson said, “and the Republicans are like, just get the politics out of it.”

Democrat Mullen focuses secretary of state campaign on Jacobsen’s “failures”

By Rally Belcher

Whether it is a battle over the proposed constitutional amendment protecting abortion rights or the fight over efforts by the legislature to change voting laws, Secretary of State Christi Jacobsen has often been at the center of intense clashes around election security and processes.

Jacobsen said she is fighting for small businesses and willing to take on political elites. Her opponent, businessman Jesse James Mullen, says the fights in court have more to do with her failures as an administrator than anything else.

“The lawsuits alone, after the first

three years, were in excess of \$3 million,” Mullen said. “We expect when all is said and done, after this year, when she has been pulled in front of the courts repeatedly for failing to do her constitutionally obligated duties, that will then be well in excess of \$4 million just spent defending themselves and losing because they’re not doing the job that they could have easily done with adequate staffing.”

Most analysts say Mullen faces an uphill battle in getting attention for his campaign in an election season dominated by Montana’s U.S. Senate race.

In 2020, Jacobsen won her office by the largest margin of any state-

wide candidate that year. During her tenure, though, the office has faced criticism.

Jacobsen had to deal with a class-action lawsuit for running an online business system that double-billed some clients. The secretary was also criticized for dragging her feet in certifying the abortion rights initiative on the ballot this year.

In late September, when online overseas voting went live, Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris and running mate Tim Walz were not listed as options when Flathead County resident Max Himsl attempted to use the service maintained by the Secretary of State

Office, according to media reports. The error was fixed that day but had gone live with the mistake in place.

“What processes are being skipped and ignored that would allow three candidates in the general election to just not appear on the ballot ... We shouldn’t have to rely on a voter filling out their poll to catch a mistake made by the Secretary of State,” Mullen said. “There needs to be processes in place to prevent it before it gets there. And whatever they’re doing clearly isn’t sufficient.”

Jacobsen, who declined multiple requests for an interview, has published a list of key issues on her campaign — among them, election integrity.

“Elections are the core of our democratic republic. I will protect

against any attempts for centralizing and thus weakening our elections,” Jacobsen said on her campaign website.

Jacobsen was born in Helena, graduated from Carroll College and later received her master’s degree in public administration from the University of Montana. The incumbent previously served as the chief deputy to former Secretary of State Cory Stapleton.

Deer Lodge small business owner Mullen runs Mullen Newspapers, an outfit that publishes 20 different newspapers and magazines across six western states. Mullen has covered elections as a journalist off and on for 20 years.

According to political analysts, Mullen’s already low name recognition is not being helped by this year’s ballot.

A political rematch in Montana's 1st Congressional District

By Marc Anthony Martinez

In a rematch race, Democrat Monica Tranel is attempting to unseat Republican Ryan Zinke in Montana's 1st Congressional District.

In 2022, Zinke beat Tranel by three percentage points. According to September polling from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, this year's race is virtually tied, with Zinke leading Tranel 46% to 45% and a margin of error of 3.3%.

Political science professor Jessi Bennion said the way the western district was drawn to include traditionally Democratic towns like Missoula, Bozeman and Butte gives Tranel a chance in an increasingly red state, especially with name recognition.

"Monica Tranel has already run, so voters know who she is. She's working hard. She's on the road a lot. But Zinke is a hard opponent," Bennion said.

Zinke, 63, a Whitefish-based former Navy SEAL and Montana state senator, was first elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2014. In 2017, President Donald Trump appointed Zinke to serve as the Secretary of the Interior. Zinke resigned

in 2019 amidst federal investigations into his conduct in office and his real estate deals in Montana. In 2022, Zinke became the first to represent Montana's 1st Congressional District in Washington, D.C.

Tranel, 58, a lawyer and former Olympic rower from Missoula, was born in Wyoming and grew up in eastern Montana. She started her legal career litigating telecommunications and energy issues.

After serving as the staff attorney for the Montana Public Services Commission, she ran as a Republican for a seat on the Commission. When she lost that race, she went to work in Washington, D.C. for Montana's Republican U.S. Sen. Conrad Burns.

In 2020, she unsuccessfully ran for the commission again as a Democrat. After that, she set her sights on Montana's new congressional district.

Political science professor Jeremy Johnson said rural Montana is moving sharply toward the Republican party, a problem for Democrats running statewide.

"In a presidential year, it's going to probably be higher than [in] the midterm election year," Johnson said. "She really needs those college

students in Missoula to come out for her."

Tranel is campaigning hard across western Montana, putting tens of thousands of miles on her family minivan. She's hosted events, walked in parades, knocked on doors, and visited schools, hospitals and post offices.

Zinke, meanwhile, has mostly been in Washington, D.C., working in a fractious Congress. In 2023, Zinke voted to keep Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., as house speaker, even as Montana's other representative, Republican Matt Rosendale, voted to oust him.

"I get a report card every two years," Zinke said, "and despite the difficulty in D.C. at the moment, we were able to get a lot done."

Zinke has helped bring western Montana nearly \$35 million to fund infrastructure, rural development and public safety projects. Zinke co-sponsored a new loan program that would make homeownership more accessible for police officers, first responders and teachers.

Housing has been a major focus

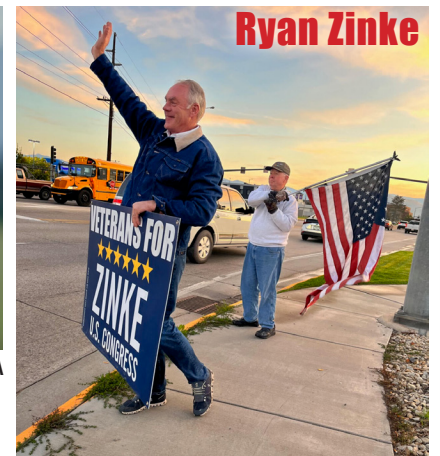


CONTRIBUTED | MONICA TRANEL FOR MONTANA

for Tranel's campaign, too. Her plan to address this crisis is to make sure the federal housing programs are fully funded so the state and counties have the resources they need to support renters and homeowners.

Both candidates talk about immigration and the border. Tranel's stance on immigration focuses on the need to secure the border and have a legal process for entry. In a recent campaign ad, Tranel distances herself on this issue from her party leadership. "We have a real crisis at the border," she says, "and Joe Biden is not doing enough to fix it."

Zinke said every city in Montana is concerned about the border because of drug and human trafficking. He believes the border should be shut down to undocumented entry. He also said the United States should make it easier for professionals like nurse practitioners, carpenters and



CONTRIBUTED | RYAN ZINKE FOR U.S. CONGRESS

laborers to enter the country legally and with a background check.

Zinke's appeal to voters hits on many of the major Republican values. "I like less government, more jobs," he said. "I don't like government control of health care. I don't like government control of our lives. I respect and enjoy Montana's independent spirit ... I want to make sure Montana is available for the next generation."

Tranel said if she were elected, she would work to improve the quality of life in the state she calls home. "I'm for Montana," she said. "I live here. I'm raising my kids here. I'm about representing the people in Montana. I would say, fundamentally, I come to this with a servant's heart."

State auditor race may hinge more on state politics than policy

By Katy McCumber

Two years ago, Republican Jim Brown mounted a campaign for the state Supreme Court, trying to secure a spot on the high court by stressing his support from Republicans.

That race ended with Justice Ingrid Gustafson cruising to reelection, and now Brown is angling to replace House candidate Troy Downing as the Republican in charge of insurance and securities in the state.

Jessi Bennion, a political science professor at Montana State University, said voters may care more about the R or D behind their name than individual policies.

"This election is going to show that Montana is no longer a purple state, but a red state. Voters are mainly just looking at the party behind the name when filling their ballot," she said.

For nearly 20 years, Montana had been governed mostly by Democrats, until 2016, when all statewide offices went to Republicans except for governor. Now, Democratic Sen. Jon Tester is the only person to hold office statewide who is not a Republican.

Despite the daunting electoral politics, Democrat John Repke sees hope in his campaign for the top insurance and securities official in the state.

Repke moved to Whitefish 10 years ago. Although the former

he said his campaign is about everyday Montanans.

"My eldest daughter lives in Whitefish, and my other two daughters live in Missoula. They are impacted by property taxes, insurance and monthly expenses just like everyone else," he said.

These "Montana roots" have been a key campaign move for the Democrats, including Tester, who has accused Republican Senate nominee Tim Sheehy as a "shady" out-of-stater. Yet, many Republicans are making the very same argument, including Republican Brown's campaign claim that Repke has been funded by out-of-state companies he used to oversee.

Brown has spent four years

business executive lives in one of the wealthiest zip codes in the state,

as chair of the Public Service Commission, the state entity in charge of overseeing energy and internet firms. He also served as legal counsel for the Montana GOP and operated his own private law practice. Several attempts to schedule a more in-depth interview with Brown were unsuccessful.

While Brown has embraced his national political party, Democrat Repke has stressed he would prefer to see voters choose candidates based on their qualifications, not party identification.

"In Montana, we are elected to be in this position," he said. "Same with the [Public Service Commission], and there's no qualifications. Anybody can run. It's a partisan race, and this really should be a nonpartisan position."

Current state auditor and Congressional candidate Troy Downing disagrees.

"Having autonomy has helped

our agency be as successful as we have been," he said. "Some of my colleagues are appointees, mostly by the governor, and they can't run their office. They answer to their governor. I answer to the voters."

Downing added the position also comes with an appointment to the Public Land Board. "The land board's purpose is to maximize the income of the dirt we are given without depleting its assets," he said.

But more than positions on the use of public lands, Jeremy Johnson, political science professor at Carroll College, said this race may come down to what letter is affixed to the candidate's names.

"When it comes to down-ballot races that don't get nearly as much attention as the well-known candidates, especially during a presidential election year, people tend to vote symbolically," he said.

Montana's superintendent of public instruction race focused on funding

By Melissa Dickson

Whoever succeeds Elsie Arntzen as superintendent of public instruction will have to pick up the pieces in an understaffed office and restore public confidence in the state's Office of Public Instruction.

"[The Office of Public Instruction] is kind of in shambles," said Jessi Bennion, professor of political science at Montana State University. "They've lost a lot of their career bureaucrats."

An interim legislative committee found that under Arntzen's leadership, the office repeatedly failed to implement education laws designed to help schoolchildren and caused "widespread confusion" in the state's schools.

Montana's superintendent of public instruction oversees K-12 education throughout the state. They are integral in guiding the office's education policy priorities and maintaining compliance with state and federal regulations. A key responsibility is attending to the needs of schools around the state.

Republican candidate Susie Hedalen, 40, is the superintendent of Townsend public schools. She received a bachelor's degree in elementary education and a master's degree in educational leadership from Montana State University,

along with a certificate in Native American studies. Previously, Hedalen taught kindergarten and served as deputy to superintendent Arntzen.

Hedalen said as superintendent, she would focus on improving outcomes for students, starting at the foundational level. She would like to facilitate tangible certifications such as dual college credit programs and trade and apprenticeship opportunities to equip students for the workforce upon graduation.

Shannon O'Brien, 55, is a Montana state senator. She received a masters in education from Gonzaga University and a doctorate of education from the University of Montana. She was the education policy adviser to former Democratic Gov. Steve Bullock and was the dean of Missoula College from 2015 to 2017. She has also served on the Montana Board of Public Education and taught in schools across the state.

Central to many Montana voters in electing a new superintendent is the funding of local schools. Montana's school districts are funded mainly by a combination of state and local revenue and taxes. This funding model has led to a disparity between schools across the state where wealthier, denser areas have more money available than poorer,

rural areas.

"Obviously, if you're in a bigger area in Montana, they can offer more programs for kids, and you can see some inequities already, in programs just based on local taxes," said Rob Watson, director of School Administrators of Montana.

Raising teacher salaries — a key component in teacher retention — is another key issue. According to data from the Office of Public Instruction, between 2017 and 2021 the state saw a 25% increase in educator positions that were difficult or unable to be filled.

"We've had teachers with starting salaries of \$30,000 a year," O'Brien said, an impossibly low salary for a new teacher leaving college with tens of thousands of dollars in student loans.

As a state senator, O'Brien said she's well-versed in education policies at the legislative level, a familiarity that would serve her well as superintendent.

"Part of my job will be in the Capitol building, reminding legislators what they value, which is a strong public education," O'Brien said. "I'll be in the Legislature supporting public schools and taxpayer dol-

Susie Hedalen



CONTRIBUTED | SUSIE HEDALEN

lars going to public schools."

O'Brien said her focus also lies in early-childhood education, setting students up for success in the future.

Hedalen said her priorities center around high-quality professional development in providing educators the tools to increase scores in reading and math at the foundational levels. She hopes to make teaching a more attractive career opportunity in Montana.

"We do need to make some shifts, and there are a lot of great conversations about how we're going to be able to increase teacher salaries at the entry level, which is critical,"

Shannon O'Brien



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Hedalen said.

Raising teacher salaries, ensuring equitable educational programming and promoting early childhood literacy will all require adequate funding. Where that money will come from, if not from property taxes, is part of the superintendent's job.

For the first time in a decade, Montana is about to completely overhaul the school funding formula. It's a complicated calculation, which relies on the Average Number Belonging to determine funding based on attendance and enrollment, and a variety of other factors like grade level needs and Guaranteed Tax Base.

"While the superintendent does not have any direct responsibility over that, they definitely need to be part of that discussion," Watson said. "Because that is a big piece of what is happening in K-12 education in Montana right now."

Take a breath and vote

By Clayton Murphy

A political vacuum of a Senate race, amendments that could determine the future of Montana politics and uphill battles for Democratic candidates across the ballot — along with a year of everyone begging for your attention — it's a lot.

But it's not without reason. This is a big year for politics in Montana and the nation, and it seems Washington D.C. may be relying on what happens in Montana more than any of us have seen before, especially in the Senate race.

Of course, we're all sick of the ceaseless pestering of "Shady Sheehy" and "D.C. Pinko" Tester. But again, it is truly an incredibly important race.

This year, your vote has more national influence than just the next president. To reiterate: Whoever wins Montana's Senate seat could very well decide the party majority in the single most powerful political chamber in the country.

In case you missed Schoolhouse Rock, this means voting on bills, laws, treaties, executive branch investigations, impeachment and other national legislation could lie in the hands of either party.

To create or amend a law, both the Senate and House must agree to approve legislation before sending it to the

president to be signed into law. While the president has the power to veto laws, that veto can be overruled by majority votes in both the Senate and House chambers.

Democrats have held the Senate majority since 2021 after a six-year run by Republicans.

But don't be distracted from what's happening here in Montana, including a push to codify abortion, a switch to rank-choice or runoff elections, changes to public land access and the ever-present battle with cost of living.

One more time: It's a lot. But instead of letting that stress you out, realize it may be an opportunity to make the changes you want to see.

So register, research, take a breath and vote.

For the full length version of these stories and coverage on the 2nd Congressional District race, visit our website at montanakaimin.com

Butte boy inducted into Hall of Fame

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Butte-born Griz football all-star and Tennessee Titans special teams coordinator Colt Anderson was inducted into the Grizzly Hall of Fame on Oct. 5.

Along with Anderson, two other Griz football players — Dylan McFarland and Scott Gurnsey — and former Lady Griz Kelly Beattie were inducted into the hall of fame. With them, former University of Montana President George Dennison was posthumously awarded the Grizzly Lifetime Honors Award for his two decades of support to Griz athletics.

A high school standout, Anderson walked on to the Griz football team in the fall of 2004. Over the course of his five years at UM, he rose through the ranks with his work ethic and drive. From 2009 to 2017, he played with the National Football League as a safety and on special teams. While he is remarkable for his NFL success, he might be most well known in Montana for his community support.

Shortly after retiring from playing in the NFL, Colt Anderson and his wife Keelie Anderson started the Dream Big Foundation in Butte.

The foundation's mission is to provide resources for kids and to encourage them to dream big. Its goal is to foster hard work and accountability by providing opportunities to kids who might not have them.

"Growing up in Butte, my parents were both teachers. They instilled in me from a young age to give back," Colt Anderson said.

The inspiration for the foundation dates back to the couple's time going to the Whitefish Winter Classic, an event put on by Doug Betters, a former Miami Dolphin defensive end. The Whitefish Winter Classic, started in 1985, raises money for children in need of medical care.

"We always wanted to do something similar in our community, on a little different route, they did medical, we wanted to do more with underserved kids," Keelie Anderson said.

Every year in June, the foundation hosts a two-day event in Butte for kids and their families, including a skills camp, concert and auction. The skills camp saw roughly 500 kids register this year. Aside from the camp, the Andersons and their team work to support their community year-round.

"We are always receiving emails from people, teachers, parents, anyone really around the community of what kids are in need of and how we can support them," Marietta Sorini, one of the Dream Big Foundation's board members and a longtime family friend of the

Andersons, said.

Recently, the foundation started a pantry program for kids and families in need of basic supplies.

"We wanted to put something in the schools that kids could comfortably go to and get anything they needed, whether it was food or personal hygiene products," Keelie Anderson said.

The pantry program is in every school in Butte and provides to kids who need food, clothes and hygiene items, Colt Anderson said. They realized many kids didn't have critical resources available to them and decided to put their foundation to work fixing it.

"We are truly blessed to have the relationships we have with the teachers and educators there that guide us to these kids and make sure everyone has the opportunity to fulfill their dreams," Colt Anderson said.

Recently, the foundation has given grants for girls' basketball, elementary school playground equipment, football helmets for a youth football team and dinners for families in need at schools.

The foundation also sent over 30 kids from Butte to the Griz football game last weekend through another one of their partnerships that gives opportunities to underserved kids.

"Colt is amazing, one of the best humans I know, and will do anything for anyone, especially the youth of Butte," Sorini said. "Keelie is really the backbone of the foundation."

Colt Anderson fell in love with the Griz in 1995 when it won the national championship against Marshall University.

"It was kinda like our professional team there in Montana as a kid," Colt Anderson said.

He was also inspired by his uncles, who played for both the Griz and the Montana State University Bobcats.

Out of high school, Colt Anderson was not recruited to UM, but walked on and redshirted his freshman year in 2004. He played in several games in 2005 until he suffered a broken thumb and sat out the rest of the season. That off season, he put in massive amounts of work to improve his conditioning and performance, enough to impress the coaches and earn himself an athletic scholarship.

Colt Anderson was a starter for a majority of games his next three seasons, and as a captain in the 2008 season, he led the team to the national championship against Richmond University where the Griz were defeated 24-7.

One of his favorite memories of playing with the Griz was Brawl of the Wild in the 2008 season when the team wore Texas orange throwback uniforms, a nod to the older team he fell in love with.

"I know the senior class was really honored



Colt Anderson, inducted into the 2024 Grizzly Sports Hall of Fame, attended the UM pink out game against Weber State on Oct. 5. **DIEGO HERNANDEZ | MONTANA KAIMIN**

to represent the 1995 team that paved the way for us," Colt Anderson said.

Colt Anderson still holds one of the top 10 records for most season tackles at UM and earned All-American honors in 2007 and 2008.

He went on to play for the Minnesota Vikings, Philadelphia Eagles, Indianapolis Colts and Buffalo Bills before retiring from the NFL after the 2017 season. He then worked with special teams with the Cincinnati Bengals for four years and transitioned to the special teams coordinator for the Tennessee Titans earlier in February of this year.

"Montana's on the map when it comes to football scouts and executives know the kind

of character we have and the type of people we are, and those are the kind of guys they want in their building," Colt Anderson said.

Keelie and Colt Anderson both described coming back to Missoula for the Grizzly Sports Hall of Fame Banquet as an exciting and special time for the family.

"For Colt and I, what's more exciting than us wanting to be here is how excited our kids are to be here," Keelie Anderson said. "Montana is their roots."

The couple brought their four kids to the stadium and let them run around on the field.

"The atmosphere is hard to replicate," Colt Anderson said. "It's just the best college atmosphere that I've ever been to."

Sophomores lead the way for up-and-coming XC squad

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Few conferences in the country have stiffer cross-country competition than the Big Sky, but the University of Montana's Carson Steckelberg and Henry Ballinger are helping to level the scales by leading the Griz as sophomores.

"Carson is very mature when it comes to racing [and] when it comes to training," head coach Doug Fraley said. "He's like having a senior out there because he's just solid as a rock."

But long before Steckelberg was helping build Montana's programs alongside his roommate, Henry Ballinger, he was cultivating one at Bozeman's Gallatin High School, while running against, rather than with, Ballinger.

"Henry and I have known each other for a really, really long time, so it was kind of nice to finally not be racing against each other, but with each other," Steckelberg said. "I think training together helps a lot, too, but as roommates, we're the closest [you] can be. You can't live with somebody and not get along with them."

While Ballinger found a natural aptitude for the mile, Steckelberg found success in the steeplechase, an event Bozeman has a history in, where runners jump over and through obstacles such as water.

"Growing up in Bozeman, there's a guy named Duncan Hamilton, who was the runner-up two times in the NCAA championships in steeple," Steckelberg said. "A lot of his records I was chasing, and it's kind of exciting to see a guy from Montana, a local guy who everyone looks up to, set steeplechase records and that's what I knew I wanted to do in college."

While Steckelberg didn't catch Hamilton's steeplechase record, he did set the Gallatin High School records in the 1600-meter and 3200-meter which still stand to this day.

Going into college, Steckelberg joined UM for the opportunity to be an immediate contributor and starter. Along with his interest in wildlife biology and fly fishing, Missoula was a natural choice.

"I definitely knew I needed to stay around somewhere with rivers. I mean, you got the Blackfoot, Bitterroot, Clark Fork right on campus, so it's kind of like you get to go anywhere, and it's just beautiful out here," Steckelberg said.

Steckelberg performed admirably in his freshman year where he gained experience from older runners, and, at the twilight of the season, ran a 4:19 mile to beat out Ballinger. The trend would carry over into both of their current careers where Ballinger has been UM's first and Steckelberg UM's second

finisher in all contests. The two have also finished within five seconds of each other in all races.

"It's great with Carson and Henry, because not only do they push each other in practice, they're pushing each other in races," Fraley said. "Henry always knows Carson is coming, and Carson knows that Henry is always going to be there. And really, it's the old adage, iron

sharpens iron."

When it comes to the future, Steckelberg hopes to keep on building the Griz program. So far, in almost all its races, underclassmen have finished in the top five. And perhaps one day, one of them will be an all-conference or all-American runner in the steeplechase.

"It's really exciting to get to say you race the best day in and day out, or the runner up to

the NCAA championships," Steckelberg said. "[Northern Arizona University's] Nico Young ran at the Olympics [last year] ... so it's really exciting to see that you're racing some of the best athletes ever in NCAA history."

The Griz will go on the road to race in the Yellowjackets/Battling Bears Open on Oct. 4 before competing in the Lewis-Clark College invite on Oct. 19.

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Missoula embraces heritage at annual Germanfest

Photos and words by **RACHEL YEAGER**
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Caras Park was filled with the vibrant sounds and hearty flavors of German culture on Sunday at Missoula's annual Germanfest, drawing crowds for a day of traditional music, dance and food.

ARTS Missoula's Global and Cultural Affairs office hosted the 31st annual Germanfest. Attendees enjoyed bratwursts, pretzels and other German dishes.

Germanfest celebrates the sister city relationship between Missoula and Neckargemünd. The two cities became sisters after a professor from the University of Montana and a professor from the University of Heidelberg participated in a Fulbright exchange and noticed their similarities. In 1993, mayors of both towns signed a pledge of friendship, making the sisterhood official. ARTS Missoula's Germanfest is not a fundraiser, but funds made during the event go back to programs to increase access to cultural experiences.

For years, ARTS Missoula has focused on high school and university student exchanges, although the high school program hasn't been active for a few years. Almost 500 young Missoulians and Neckargemünders have been able to spend time in each other's cities thanks to this friendship.

The festival featured live performances by local bands playing traditional German music as

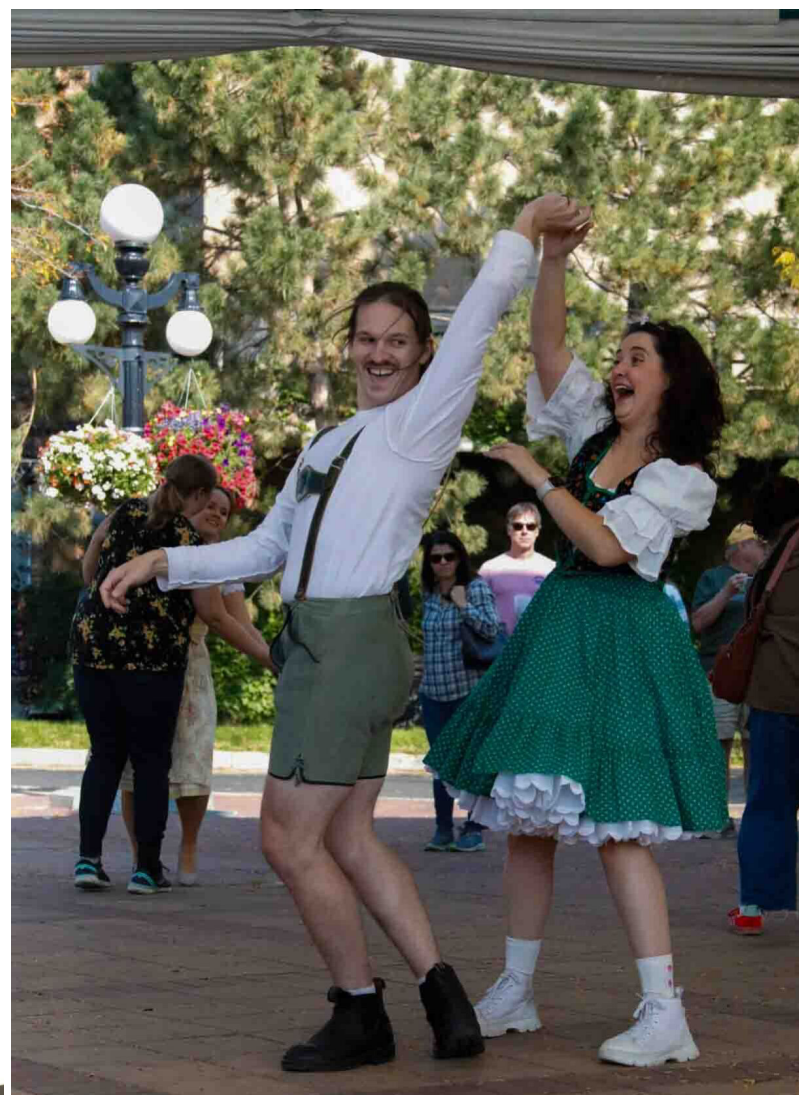
well as dance performances that had the crowd clapping along. Guests were also supplied with many options of foods and beverages, including Bayern Brewing's beer, which is brewed in accordance to the German law of purity.

In addition to music and food, anyone could release pent-up anger by slapping others with a foam fish until someone spits out the water in their mouth. The festival also had activities for children, like a blow-up ax-throwing area. Or they could test their strength at a stein-holding competition, where a glass is filled to the brim and people hold it straight out as long as possible.

Overseeing these competitions was local Montanan, David Sturzen, a competitive stein-holding champion. Sturzen was hard to miss, walking around with his giant championship belt and his grandpa's pin-covered hat. He said he never does a competition without it.

"It's great to meet new people. I love to coach as well, and I do a lot of judging now and since I'm German," Sturzen said. "It's just great to just celebrate my heritage."

The festival aims to foster cultural exchange and strengthen the bond between the two cities. Attendees left Caras Park with full bellies and smiles, satisfied from the eventful day.



TOP RIGHT: Elijah Miller and Frances Connery dance to live music at Caras Park on Oct. 6.

BOTTOM LEFT: Michelle Parker smacks a foam fish across Ben Acree's face as her kids watch in amusement.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Attendees enjoy live music and traditional German food at Missoula's annual Germanfest, celebrating culture and community.

