



MEMORANDUM

TO: Gerry Singleton & Karen Smith
FROM: Jessie Luther & Mark Taylor
DATE: June 5, 2024
RE: Montana Political Landscape – 2024 Primary Election

Note: At the time this memo was written, only about 93% of precincts are fully reported, but we do not expect it to materially impact any outcomes. The percentages related to turnout and vote totals may be slightly off.

The Montana Primary Election was held on June 4. Voter turnout was low at just over 40%. Primary elections are usually low voter turnout. For example, last cycle's primary had only 39.40% turnout. 2020 was the last cycle where there was a presidential race and all statewide races were up for election and there was 54.87% turnout. Below are the outcomes of the primary election and the matchups for the general election. I've also attached a spreadsheet showing all of the legislative races.

U.S. Senate

The Montana Senate race continues to be one of the most hotly contested Senate races nationwide this cycle as it will be one of a handful of races that determine party control of the U.S. Senate. Incumbent Jon Tester (D) won the primary with 97% of the vote. Tester will be facing off in the general election against Bozeman businessman Tim Sheehy (R). Sheehy defeated Brad Johnson and Charles Walkingchild in the Republican primary by garnering 74% of the vote. Michael Downey won the Green Party primary with 62% of the vote, over Robert Bard. Sid Daoud, a Libertarian, rounds out the candidates for the Senate race.

U.S. Congress

This will be the first election cycle with Montana's new congressional seat following the 2020 Census. The districts are split essentially between east and west.

Congressional Seat 1. Incumbent Ryan Zinke (R) defeated Mary Todd (R) in a primary challenge 74% to 26%. Monica Tranel is the lone Democrat seeking this seat. Dennis Hayes was the successful candidate in the Libertarian primary with 65% of the vote over Ernie Noble. Zinke and Tranel will face off for a rematch of 2022 in the general election.

Congressional Seat 2. This new seat had the largest fields of both the Republicans and Democrats seeking election with nine Republican candidates and four Democrat candidates. Current State Auditor Troy Downing won 36% of the vote to defeat the other 8 candidates in his primary, including former state representative Joel Krautter, current Superintendent of Public Instruction Elsie Arntzen, current State Senator Ken Bogner, former Montana Congressman Denny Rehberg, former state senator Ed Walker, and political newcomers Kyle Austin, Stacy Zinn, and Ric Holden. The amount that Downing won by in this diverse primary is probably one

of the biggest surprises of the primary as most people expected the race to be won by someone in the mid-20s. The Democrat primary was won by John Driscoll with 34% of the vote. He outlasted political advocate Kevin Hamm, father of the named child in the recent environmental *Held* Decision Steve Held, and Ming Cabrera. Troy Downing (R) and John Driscoll (D) will face off in the general election.

Montana Statewide Offices

All five Montana statewide offices are up for election this cycle. These five offices make up the Land Board seats, and each is a term of four years. The Montana Supreme Court races are elected statewide and are nonpartisan races.

Governor & Lieutenant Governor. Incumbent Republican Governor Greg Gianforte (Lieutenant Governor Kristin Juras) easily won the primary with 75% of the vote over challengers Tanner Smith (Governor) and current PSC member Randy Pinocci (Lt. Governor). In the Democrat primary, candidates Ryan Busse (Governor) and Raph Graybill (Lt. Governor) outlasted Jim Hunt and Jerry Driscoll. Libertarian Kaiser Leib is seeking the position of Governor with a currently unknown Lt. Governor partner.

Secretary of State. Republican incumbent Christi Jacobsen is seeking re-election against Democrat Jesse James Mullen and Libertarian John Lamb. This is one of the few races that lacked primary elections.

Attorney General. Incumbent Republican Austin Knudsen defeated challenger Logan Olson with 82% of the vote. Democrat Ben Alke did not have a primary and will face Knudsen in the general election.

State Auditor. While four Republicans initially filed for this seat, the primary only had 2 candidates as the others withdrew or were removed for failure to file paperwork. James Brown defeated John Jay Willoughby 70%-30% in the primary. John Repke (D) will face off against Brown (R) in the general.

Office of Public Instruction. Republican Susie Hedalen defeated Sharyl Allen 62%-38% in the Republican primary. Current state senator Shannon O'Brien (D) will face off against Hedalen in the general.

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. Current Chief Justice Mike McGrath is retiring, leaving his seat open. The candidates for this position and vote percentage garnered include Cory Swanson (46%), Doug Marshall (16%) and Jeremiah Lynch (37%). Swanson and Lynch will move forward to the general election as they are the two highest vote-getters.

Supreme Court 3. There were also three candidates for the Supreme Court Justice #3 position: Dan Wilson (35%), Katherine Bidegaray (48%) and Jerry O'Neil (17%). Bidegaray and Wilson will advance to the general election.

Clerk of the Supreme Court. The Clerk position is a partisan position, unlike the offices of Justice. Incumbent Bowen Greenwood defeated Jason Ellsworth in the Republican Primary. Erin Farris-Olsen defeated Jordan Ophus in the Democrat primary. Long time Libertarian candidate Roger Roots is also seeking the office.

Montana State Districts

Public Service Commission 2. Incumbent Tony O’Donnell is term limited. Republican Brad Molnar defeated Kirk Bushman in the primary while Democrat Susan Bilo did not have a primary challenger. Molnar and Bilo will face off in the General.

Public Service Commission 3. Three Republicans are sought this seat: Rob Elwood, Suzann Nordwick and term limited state senator Jeff Welborn. Jeff Welborn narrowly won the race with 40% of the vote. Welborn will face off against Democrat Leonard Williams in the general.

Public Service Commission 4. Incumbent Republican Jennifer Fielder’s challenger was removed/withdrew and she is now unopposed for this seat.

Montana Legislature. There are 34 Republican Primaries in the House and 10 Republican Primaries in the Senate, while there are 11 Democrat Primaries in the House and 4 in the Senate.

SENATE

- **SD 5:** R primary – Matt Regier 67% over Marqis Laude 33%. Regier to face Link Neimark-D in general.
- **SD 13:** R primary – Josh Kassmier 64% over Lola Sheldon-Galloway 36%. Kassmier unopposed in general.
- **SD 15:** R primary – Gregg Hunter 62% over Rhonda Knudsen 38%. Hunter unopposed in general.
- **SD 16:** D primary – Jonathan Windy Boy 68% over Bridget Smith 32%
- **SD 17:** R primary – Bob Phalen 60% over Mike Newton 40%. Phalen unopposed in general.
- **SD 21:** D primary – Sharon Stewart Peregoy 61% over Rae Peppers 39%. Stewart Peregoy to face Gayle George Lammers-R in general.
- **SD 27:** R primary – Vince Ricci 61% over Chris Friedel 39%. Ricci to face Kathleen Gilluly-D in general.
- **SD 35:** R primary – Tony Tezak 40% over Ray Shaw 39% and Mark McGinley 22%. Tezak unopposed in general.
- **SD 36:** D primary – Sara Novak 64% over Jessica Wicks 36%. Novak to face Darlean Newman-R in general.
- **SD 38:** R primary – Becky Beard 48% over Greg Frazer 26% and Jeremy Mygland 26%. Beard to face Jeffery Benson in general.
- **SD 44:** R primary – Theresa Manzella 49% over Wayne Rusk 43% and Brad Davis 8%. Manzella to face Cade Scatolini-D in general.
- **SD 45:** R primary – Denley Loge 71% over Annamarie White 29%. Loge to face Devin Jackson-D in general.
- **SD 46:** D primary – Jacinda Morigeau 54% over CB Pearson 46%. Morigeau to face Charles Headley-R in general.
- **SD 47:** R primary – Abigail Maki 68% over Erica Siate 32%. Maki to face Ellie Hill Boldman-D in general.

HOUSE

- **HD 2:** R primary – Tom Millett 57% over Thomas Jenkins 43%. Millett to face Elizabeth Story-D in general.
- **HD 3:** D primary – Debo Powers 73% over Guthrie Quist 27%. Powers to face Cathy Mitchell-R in general.
- **HD 7:** R primary – Courtenay Sprunger 63% over Shaun Pandina 37%. Sprunger to face Arthur Fretheim-D in general.
- **HD 8:** R primary – Lukas Schubert 60% over Tony Brockman 40%. Schubert to face Beth Sibert-D in general.
- **HD 9:** R primary – Steven Kelly 55% over Lee Huestis 45%. Kelly to face Jane Morrow-D in general.
- **HD 11:** R primary – Ed Byrne 63% over Rob Tracy 37%. Byrne to face Jennifer Allen-D in general.
- **HD 16:** R primary – Elaine Mitchell 71% over Rolland Heagy 29%. Mitchell to face Tyson Running Wolf-D in general.
- **HD 18:** R primary – Llew Jones 71% over James Coombs 29%. Jones to face David Arends-D in general.
- **HD 19:** R primary – Hannah Trebas 62% over Derren Auger 38%. Trebas to face Jane Webber-D in general.
- **HD 20:** R primary – Melissa Nikolakakos 51% over Steven Galloway 49% (37 vote difference). Nikolakakos to face Rina Fontana Moore-D in general.
- **HD 21:** R primary – Ed Buttrey 73% over James Osterman 27%. Buttrey to face Lela Graham-D and Joshua Rosales-L in general.
- **HD 22:** R primary – George Nikolakakos 72% over James Whitaker 28%. Nikolakakos to face Ronald Paulick-D in general.
- **HD 23:** R primary – Eric Tilleman 61% over Pete Anderson 22%, John Proud 14% and Josh Denuilly 4%. Tilleman to face Sandor Hopkins-D in general.
- **HD 26:** R primary – Russel Miner 53% over Dana Darlington 47%. Miner unopposed in general.
- **HD 28:** R primary – Eric Albus 41% over Mark Wicks 33% and Wayne Stahl 26%. Albus to face Blake Borst-D in general.
- **HD 29:** R primary – Valerie Moore 69% over Miles Knudsen 31%. Moore unopposed in general.
- **HD 31:** D primary – Frank Smith 61% over Lance Fourstar 39%. Smith to face Kevin Taylor-R in general.
- **HD 33:** R primary – Brandon Ler 63% over Kathy Hoiland 37%. Ler unopposed in general.
- **HD 38:** R primary – Greg Oblander 82% over Nancy Kemler 18%. Oblander unopposed in general.
- **HD 40:** R primary – Mike Vinton 67% over Josh Visocan 33%. Vinton to face Bob Auch-D in general.
- **HD 47:** R primary – Stephanie Moncada 52% over Thomas Mahon 48%. Moncada to face James Reavis-D in general.
- **HD 53:** R primary – Nelly Nicol 52% over David Austin 48%. Nicol to face Ellie Kerns-D in general.
- **HD 55:** R primary – Brad Barker 52% over Mary Horman 25% and Lisa Bennett 23%. Barker to face Kim Gillan-D in general.

- **HD 58:** D primary – Jamie Islay 91% over Dean Williamson 9%. Islay to face Jason Gunderson-R in general.
- **HD 62:** D primary – Joshua Seckinger 53% over Rio Roland 47%. Seckinger to face Owen Lang-R in general.
- **HD 63:** R primary – Mark Lewis 67% over Joe Flynn 33%. D primary – Peter Strand 79% over John Hansen 21%.
- **HD 65:** D primary – Brian Close 64% over Anja Wookeyhuffman 36%. Close to face Esther Fishbaugh-R in General.
- **HD 68:** R primary – Caleb Hinkle 47% over Jennifer Carlson 36% and Scott Sales 17%. Hinkle to face Alexander Colafrancesco-D in general.
- **HD 70:** R primary – Shannon Maness 49% over Mary Ann Nicholas 39% and Mike Klakken 12%. Maness unopposed in general.
- **HD 76:** R primary – John Fitzpatrick 52% over Dave Kesler 48%. Fitzpatrick unopposed in general.
- **HD 77:** R primary – Jane Gillette 51% over Kyle McMurray 49%. Gillette to face Jeremiah Dawson in general.
- **HD 78:** R primary – Randyn Gregg 53% over James Bergstrom 47%. Gregg to face Glenn Lambert-D in general.
- **HD 79:** R primary – Jill Sark 67% over Demetri Joslin 33%. D primary – Luke Muszkiewicz 57% over Emily Harris 37% and Anne Woodland 6%. Sark and Muszkiewicz to face off in general.
- **HD 82:** D primary – Pete Elverum 54% over SK Rossi 46%. Elverum to face John Looney in general.
- **HD 83:** R primary – Wes Feist 66% over Christopher St Jean 34%. Feist to face Jill Cohenour-D in general.
- **HD 84:** R primary – Julie Dooling 78% over Jon Jackson 22%. D primary – Michele Crepeau 81% over David Williams 19%. Dooling and Crepeau to face off in the general.
- **HD 85:** R primary – Kathy Love 53% over Michele Binkley 47%. Love to face Laura Mae Jackson-D in general.
- **HD 86:** R primary – David Bedey 76% over Robert Wallace 24%. Bedey to face Jeff Kempka-D in general.
- **HD 88:** R primary – Greg Overstreet 54% over Kim Dailey 46%. Overstreet to face Evan Schroedel in general.
- **HD 90:** R primary – Curtis Cochran 39% over Jeff Stanek 34% and Steven Delisle 27%. Cochran unopposed in general.
- **HD 97:** D primary – Melody Cunningham 83% over Lisa Verlanic Fowler 17%. Cunningham to face Nick Knowles-R and Richard Armerding-L in general.
- **HD 100:** D primary – SJ Howell 72% over Tim Garrison 28%. Howell to face Christopher Paul Buckles-R in general.