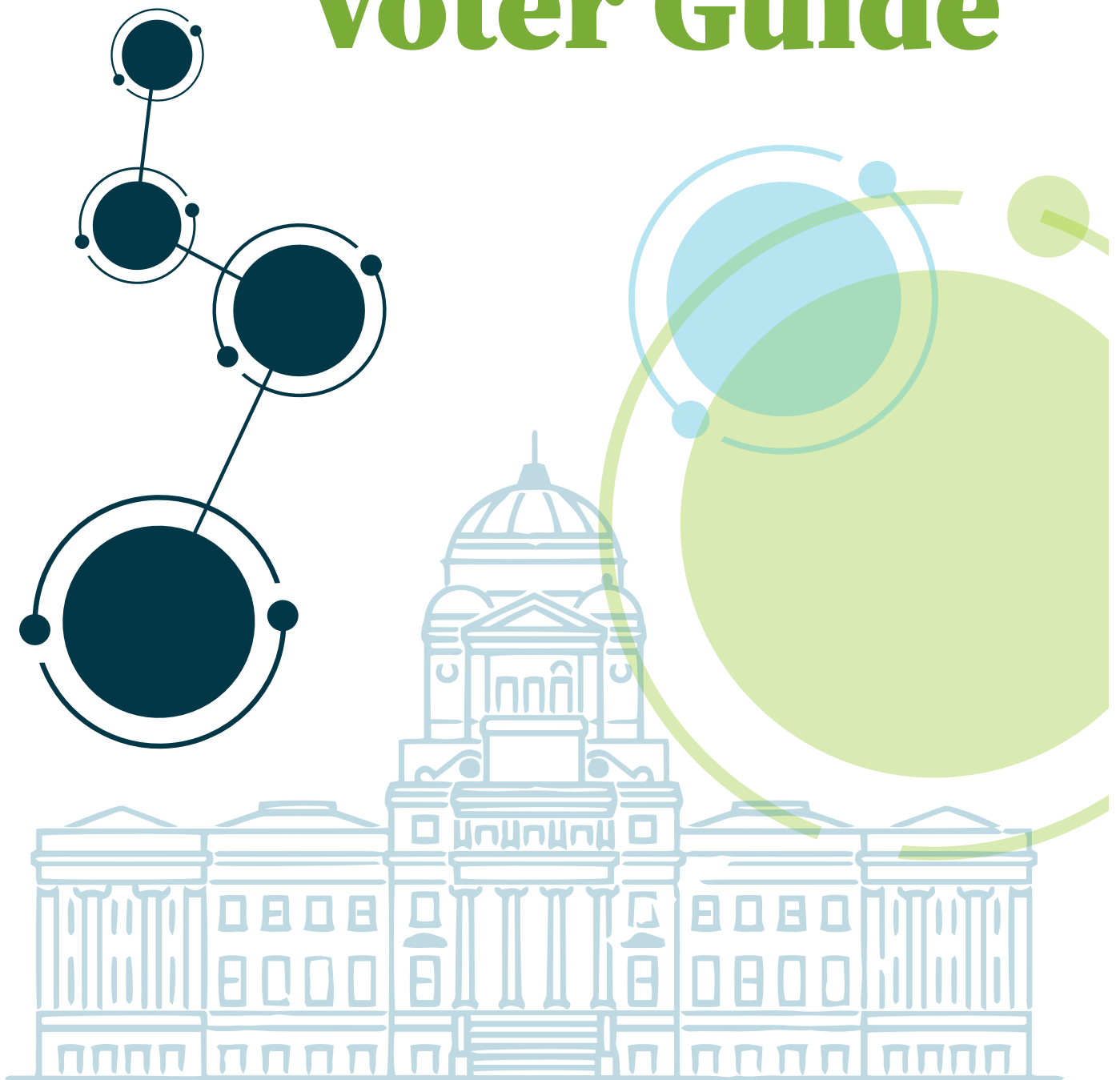


Montana Nonprofit Association

2026

Nonprofit Voter Guide



About this voter guide

Candidates for statewide elections in Montana were asked to respond to four questions about their relationship to nonprofits.

All candidates were contacted by email and phone (when provided in their campaign filing information).

The responses that we received are included here in their entirety. Not all candidates responded to our request.

MNA is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and is strictly nonpartisan. We do not endorse or oppose any candidates.



US Senator

Kurt Alme REPUBLICAN

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

My history in Montana is deeply intertwined with our nonprofit community and its extraordinary service to the people across our state. I have had the rewarding experience of working with the Montana Nonprofit Association and many, many other Montana nonprofits to serve the people of our state.

As an attorney at the Crowley Fleck law firm, I had the pleasure of representing many Montana nonprofits (and many of them pro bono) on various legal and tax issues. One nonprofit I represented pro bono was the Mental Health Association's Yellowstone County Guardianship Council. For that service, I was named the Mental Health Association Honoree for Outstanding Service in the Field of Mental Health in 2000.

Starting in the late 1990s, I have had the fulfilling opportunity to work with many nonprofits on the passage and renewals of, and the administrative rules and trainings for the Montana Endowment Tax Credit.

For decades, I have also served our state and the Billings Community as a board member and/or volunteer for many nonprofits, including: Family Promise of Yellowstone Valley, St. Vincent's Healthcare, St. John's Lutheran Ministries, Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation, Boys and Girls Club of Yellowstone County Endowment Foundation, and Friendship House of Christian Service. I have also been involved in other community groups and nonprofits including the Montana Attorney General's Intelligence Advisory Board, University of Montana Law School Tax Institute Advisory Board, State Bar of Montana Uniform Trust Code Committee, Montana State University Billings Law and Justice Advisory Committee, Billings Downtown Rotary, the Billings Area Chamber of Commerce, Boulder/Arrowhead Little League, Upward Basketball for Youth, Cub Scouts - Black Otter District, and our church.

So many nonprofits do critical work for our communities, but I have a special place in my heart for the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch Foundation. I worked closely with it as its outside counsel, board member, Vice President and General Counsel, and as President. While serving as its President, I was named the Outstanding Fundraising Professional in 2017 by the Montana Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. At Yellowstone Foundation, I had the privilege of working with Montana's farming and ranching families, and many other very generous people. Together, we partnered to primarily serve the emotionally troubled youth cared for by the Ranch – to help them find their footing, build better futures, and strengthen our communities across Montana.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

I was born in Great Falls where my parents were educators. They taught me the importance of serving others, and I still often talk about service being a Montana value we all cherish and practice in our daily lives. Montana nonprofits are a testament to the fact that in Montana, we step up to help our neighbors who need it, and that's something that makes our state great!

Nonprofits awaken and channel our neighborly spirit into action. They highlight needs, provide opportunities to serve and give, and efficiently focus community resources to address important problems.

Whether it is providing Montanans with the skills and education they need to build a good-paying career and strengthen our workforce, providing those in need with resources to get back on their feet, helping keep more Montanans healthy, supporting our veterans, and many other worthwhile causes, nonprofits play a critical role in supporting our neighbors, our communities, and our economy across the state.

I appreciate the work done by our nonprofits and the Montana Nonprofit Association.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

There are many nonprofit sectors, each with their own challenges — too many to list here.

However, most nonprofits share the need for more stable resources to carry out their missions. To stimulate our charitable spirit and serve our families and communities, Congress should endorse common sense policies that encourage more Montanans to support nonprofits.

An example of government stimulation that has worked is the Montana Endowment Tax Credit (METC). The METC has been a stabilizing force to the missions of many Montana charities. Historically, Montana charities had little endowment. Economic cycles cause private giving and government funding to fluctuate. With little endowment, charities had no ability to moderate those fluctuations. The METC has helped nonprofits stabilize their missions and provided a constant funding stream to expand.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

Good policymaking starts by listening to the people on the ground who understand the needs of their local communities best. My time working in the nonprofit community taught me that most enduring solutions are built from the bottom up. That means showing up across the state, keeping in touch, and actively partnering with the local organizations that embody our neighborly Montana values.

When we work together and ground our decisions in local, real-world experience, we can deliver practical policies that look out for our neighbors and make our state stronger.

As Senator, my door will always be open to our nonprofits as we work together to serve all Montanans across our great state.

US Senator

Kyle Austin LIBERTARIAN

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

I do not have a favorite, but I have worked closely with nonprofits such as the Yellowstone boys and girls ranch, Relay for Life, LIFT, local baseball leagues, etc.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

Non-profits fill voids and provide jobs and services in our communities that the government and large corporations are unable to fill.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

Non-profits face challenges of being underfunded, staff burnout, and administrative challenges. Lowering the costs of doing business, improving staffing shortages, and eliminating government red tape would be actions I would support as Montana's next U.S. Senator.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

As Montana's next United States Senator, having regular meetings with non-profit leaders to collect feedback on what is happening in the local communities would be the most beneficial to developing policy solutions in D.C.

Alani Bankhead DEMOCRAT

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

One organization close to my heart is the Yellowstone Human Trafficking Task Force, led by Penny Ronning — who, having spent much of my own career hunting the people who traffic and exploit others, I can tell you is one of the finest anti-trafficking advocates in the country. Under her leadership, a coalition of law enforcement, service providers, and everyday Montanans has helped more than triple our state's trafficking convictions since 2016, passed more than a dozen state laws and several federal ones, trained thousands of people to spot the signs, and stood with survivors every step of the way. I will always do everything I can to support fearless leaders like Penny and missions like hers. Protecting the vulnerable is personal to me, and this is exactly the kind of work I'll champion in the Senate.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

Nonprofits are the connective tissue of Montana. They employ nearly 60,000 of us — about one in eight working Montanans — but their real value can't be counted on a spreadsheet. They keep the food bank stocked, the domestic-violence shelter open, the rural clinic's doors unlocked, and the after-school program running in towns the private market has written off. In much of rural Montana, a nonprofit is the only safety net there is. They step in exactly where the government is too slow and the market sees no profit — and they do it with a fraction of the resources. When we invest in Montana's nonprofits, we're investing in the communities that hold this state together.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

The biggest challenge is instability — nonprofits are being asked to do more every year with funding that's less reliable every year, and the recent federal grant freezes and cuts have thrown budgets and payrolls into chaos. On top of that, rural organizations struggle to recruit and keep staff, and small nonprofits get buried in compliance costs built for large institutions.

Federal actions I'd support:

- Restore predictable federal funding and end the politicized freezing of grants that nonprofits and the people they serve depend on.
- Bring back a universal charitable deduction so every Montanan — not just itemizers — gets credit for giving, which especially helps small, local nonprofits.
- Cut the red tape that falls hardest on small and rural organizations, and fund capacity-building so they can actually reach the communities that need them.
- Protect the sector's independence — a nonprofit's funding should never hinge on whether its mission is politically convenient in Washington.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

The same way I've run this whole campaign: listen first. Nonprofit leaders are on the ground with the people my policies will affect, so they shouldn't be an afterthought — they should have a permanent seat at the table. I'll keep direct lines open between my office and Montana's nonprofit community, hold regular listening sessions across all 56 counties, and bring nonprofit leaders in before legislation is written, not after. I don't believe in speaking for communities — I believe in working alongside the people already doing the work, and matching my actions to their needs.

US Senator

Seth Bodnar INDEPENDENT

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

One organization comes to mind immediately: United Way. As both a community member and as a leader of a public institution, I've seen firsthand how they actively serve to convene and empower partners, directing resources to areas of greatest need. United Way exemplifies what makes Montana's nonprofit sector so essential: deep community trust, and the ability to adapt and respond when people need help most.

When I arrived at the University of Montana, one of my first priorities was to ground the campus and our students in an ethic of service. I knew that partnering with nonprofits who embody this ethic would be a key part of our strategy. One example early in my tenure was to partner with United Way of Missoula to host United Food Friday, which brought the community and campus together to pack lunches for children in need. The United Way enabled our effort to turn the University into an engine of service. This event eventually led to our annual partnership with several nonprofits across the community to introduce first-year students to the joy and importance of service. Through the Big Sky Experience program for first-year students, we annually paired students with local nonprofits. We partnered with organizations like the United Way, the Poverello Center, Free Cycles, and the Missoula Food Bank to cultivate in students (Montana's future leaders!) an appreciation for the vital role Montana's nonprofits play in a resilient Montana.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

Nonprofits are often the backbone of services and opportunities that Montana communities couldn't otherwise sustain. When the government falls short due to funding gaps, limited capacity, or lack of reach, nonprofits step in with the flexibility and local knowledge to meet real needs. Beyond direct services, they're economic engines in their own right, employing thousands of Montanans and reinvesting in the towns and neighborhoods they serve. They're also often the first to identify emerging problems and pilot the innovative solutions that shape better public policy down the road.

One of my favorite quotations comes from Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative. He explains that to be effective, one must "get proximate" to the people who are suffering. Montana's nonprofits show us what it looks like to stay closely connected to the people they serve. Montana's resilience, both economic and otherwise, depends on this type of attentive, local proximity to people and their needs.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

The biggest challenge I hear consistently is funding instability. Nonprofits are being asked to do more with less, while facing uncertainty around federal grants and proposed cuts to programs that many Montana communities depend on. I would support protecting and strengthening federal funding streams that nonprofits rely on, cutting red tape that makes grant administration unnecessarily burdensome, and pushing back on efforts to eliminate programs without a real plan for who fills that gap. Montana's nonprofits shouldn't have to operate in a constant state of uncertainty about whether the support they need will be there next year.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

I believe good policy starts with listening to the people closest to the problem. As I mentioned above, proximity to those you serve is crucial. Nonprofit leaders have years of lived, on-the-ground experience in their communities, and they're often the most credible voice on what's actually working and what isn't. If elected, I'll make it a priority to engage nonprofit leaders early and often — not as an afterthought, but as genuine partners throughout the policymaking process. That means creating real opportunities for input before decisions are made, and treating that collaboration as an ongoing relationship rather than a one-time consultation. I believe strongly that sound federal policy lives upstream of the social determinants of health that impact our communities and families. I would prioritize listening to and learning from nonprofit leaders as I seek to understand the ways well-designed policy can be a powerful tool for lasting change.



US Representative (MT-01)

Sam Forstag DEMOCRAT

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

During my time working as an organizer and advocate here in Montana, one of the programs I am proudest of helping to build and run is The Montana Coalition to Solve Homelessness, which was an advocacy group that brought together nonprofits from across the state (like the Poverello Center in Missoula, the Montana Rescue Mission in Billings, and the Samaritan House in Kalispell, just to name a few, to secure state funding and support for homeless shelters here in Montana. My time working alongside these incredible organizations was a profound education. Figuring out how to best serve the unhoused members of our community is an enormous, incredibly complicated problem, but seeing the dedication and resilience of those who've dedicated their lives to this mission continues to fill me with immense hope.

I have also worked to support Free Verse, a nonprofit that provides poetry classes to the incarcerated, and in terms of sheer inspiration, the work that those folks do every day is tough to beat. Some of the most powerful moments of my life were when I got to share the poetry that incarcerated children had written with state lawmakers, which often directly impacted their decision to vote for criminal justice reform.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

A core tenet of my campaign is that, while capitalism has proven an incredibly powerful system for generating wealth, there are myriad instances when the market cannot meet a societal need—and in those cases, we need to figure out how to work outside market logic. Nonprofits are one of the best tools we have for ensuring that when a profit-driven model cannot provide a good, our communities can step in and support these critical niches. Some of the most important contributions nonprofits make right here in Montana range from the incredible work that Montana Conservation Corps does taking care of our public lands to the critical care that Planned Parenthood of Montana provides to its patients. The benefits that our state's nonprofits provide to the communities they support directly feeds back into our local economy—because when people are supported, they have an increased capacity to pursue their own forms of value creation, and we are all better off.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

Fundamentally, the greatest challenge facing Montana's nonprofits today is an economic system that has systematically disenfranchised the working and middle-class. Right now, far too many people in this state are in a situation of constant economic precarity, worried about how they are going to pay their rent or buy groceries—to say nothing of how they are going to support the nonprofit organizations they believe in. As Montana's next congressman, I will fight relentlessly to fix our broken and corrupt systems of taxation, housing, and healthcare, and to rebuild the sorts of programs that working people depend on, so that we can once again have a strong, stable middle class—which will lead to increased support for the nonprofit sector.

Represents Montana in the US House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.



In more immediate terms, the gutting of institutions like the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and AmeriCorps has been a disaster for our country—and a perfect example of how those in power want to slash the institutions that enrich and support the lives of working people, while siphoning public funds into their own pockets. In Congress, I will fight against those efforts to defund the agencies that provide the grants so many nonprofits rely on.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

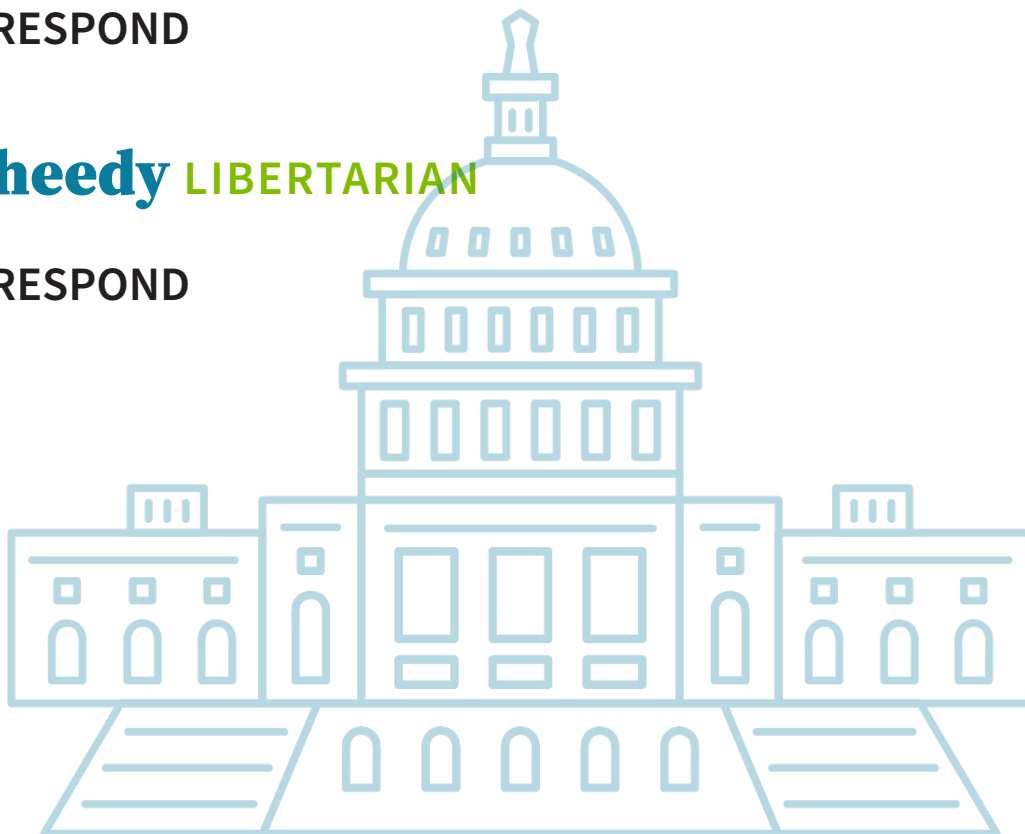
My entire career of organizing and advocacy here in Montana has been centered on building coalitions and creating spaces for dialogue between stakeholders. As western Montana's next congressman, I will rely heavily on the decade-old relationship I have with so many nonprofit leaders around the state to provide input and advice, especially when policy decisions directly affect the communities they serve. Whereas many politicians might provide lip service to nonprofit leaders when it becomes politically expedient, I have a long-track record of working for and with Montana's nonprofit organizations—and I know firsthand the immense value of their expertise.

Aaron Flint REPUBLICAN

DID NOT RESPOND

Nick Sheedy LIBERTARIAN

DID NOT RESPOND



US Representative (MT-02)

Troy Downing REPUBLICAN

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

Montanans are incredibly generous and philanthropic. I have supported foundations and causes ranging from Eagle Mount offering therapeutic recreational programs for children, to Big Sky Bravery, helping our Special Ops active military members, to the Bozeman Art Museum, the Helena Symphony, the SW Montana Mountain Bike Association, Habitat for Humanity, The Hilleman Scholars at MSU, and Warriors and Quiet Waters. I have served on several boards with a few of these and others. I have also volunteered helping with recreational activities, and in a few cases, swinging axes and shovels building and repairing hiking and mountain biking trails.

One especially close to my heart is Warriors & Quiet Waters. They provide post-9/11 combat veterans with therapeutic outdoor experiences that promote healing, resilience, and purpose. Their work is a powerful reminder that some of the most meaningful support for our veterans comes from local communities, not Washington. I have been involved with this foundation from nearly the beginning and sat on the National Advisory Board when that was first created.

Before running for office, I was a frequent volunteer in the programs WQW offered and saw my family get larger every year as we continued relationships with the veterans and families who came through the programs. Organizations like Warriors & Quiet Waters reinforce my belief that Congress should empower—not replace—the work of effective nonprofits.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

Nonprofits strengthen the fabric of our communities by serving those in need, supporting veterans, providing educational opportunities, promoting humanities, protecting our natural resources, and filling gaps the government often cannot. They create jobs, mobilize volunteers, and deliver services with local knowledge and accountability. Strong not for profit organizations and associations like MNA build stronger communities.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

Biggest issues are: access to capital, rising costs, workforce shortages, ambiguity in grant programs, and regulatory burdens.

The federal government should reduce unnecessary red tape, preserve and encourage charitable giving, and ensure grant programs are transparent and accessible without creating overbearing compliance requirements. The goal should be to let nonprofits spend more time serving people and less time navigating government.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

I pride myself in fostering relationships and building stakeholder engagement. The people closest to a problem are often closest to the solution. My staff and I make it our mission to continually meet with nonprofit leaders, faith-based organizations, and MT community partners to hear what is working and where Washington can get out of the way. Good policy starts by listening to the people doing the work on the ground. I will continue to advocate for and listen to the people on the ground everyday.

Brian Miller DEMOCRAT

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

A non-profit I respect and support is the Helena Food Share.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

They provide services and fundings in areas that the government and the free market are unable to address, and yet are important to quality of life and well-being.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

I am not sure what the biggest challenges are for non-profits, but in terms of actions to support or address them, I am open to hearing from experts in the industry itself, as I believe in the importance of non-profits in Montana, and American society in general.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

I would visit with non-profit leaders and find out what it is their trying to do and understand how we can get it done. My door would always be open to the non-profit community.

Patrick McCracken LIBERTARIAN

DID NOT RESPOND

US Representative (MT-02)

Michael Eisenhauer INDEPENDENT

1. Share an example of one of your favorite Montana nonprofits or a nonprofit you work closely with.

As a physician, I am often in direct contact with the many non-profit healthcare entities in our State's rural health care network. Together, those smaller facilities partner with larger healthcare organizations to provide a coordinated "system of care" that covers a large part of Montana. Simply stated, without a vibrant and functioning rural healthcare system providing a ready access-to-care model for smaller communities, we will see a dramatic increase in both acute and preventable illness, and even avoidable deaths.

Together, this system of non-profit clinics, hospitals, and long-term care facilities across Montana's 2nd US Congressional District provide a lifeline of sorts — that allow for a high rural quality of life, while maintaining access to readily available and quality healthcare for both routine and emergent needs.

As a Cardiologist, it is easy for me to relate that if there are no close-by rural health care facilities available should a victim suffer an acute illness (such as a heart attack), that the delays in care required to then drive 4 or more hours in a private automobile may well prove to be the difference between life and death. Our networked rural facilities provide an ability to not only begin potentially life-saving treatment immediately, but also to effectively arrange for prompt patient transport to a more comprehensive healthcare facility most likely to be found in a larger city.

This is why I will be paying so much attention to the Rural Healthcare Transformation Project that is currently being started in Montana — a federally funded \$233M effort to stabilize and modernize our rural healthcare system.

2. What do you see as the most important contributions nonprofits make to Montana's economy and local communities?

While many people may think that "nonprofits" function primarily as charity organizations, that simply is not true. Many nonprofit organizations function as employers, service providers, community builders, and economic drivers. Simply stated, they are critical to our economy and our desired way of life, as they help our communities to remain attractive places to live and to work.

Nonprofits are part of the backbone of Montana. They care for our veterans, feed our neighbors, support our seniors, mentor our kids, strengthen our rural communities, and preserve the places we love. Together, they remind us that some of the most important work in our state isn't only measured by 'profit' alone — it's also measured by people whose lives are changed.

3. What do you believe are the biggest challenges facing Montana nonprofits today and what federal actions would you support to address them?

Montana nonprofits face many of the same challenges as do other organizations nationwide, but the state's vast geography, rural population and workforce shortages make those challenges especially acute.

Federal policy can play an important role, particularly when it complements state, tribal, local, and private efforts. The federal government can help — not by replacing local leadership, but by being a better partner to help Montana's families, communities, and economy. Together we are stronger, and our federal government can:

- Help to recruit, train, and retain workers through workforce initiatives,
- Simplify grant applications and reporting requirements to reduce financial uncertainty and reduce administrative burden,
- Protect rural and frontier communities by supporting remote service delivery (telehealth, broadband, etc.),
- Help with affordable housing,
- Expand funding for mental health and community behavior health needs,
- Support child care providers through grants and other means,
- Provide expanded tax incentives for charitable giving and philanthropy,
- Promote public-private partnerships that leverage federal dollars with local and private investment,
- and so much more.

4. If elected, how would you engage nonprofit leaders when developing policy solutions affecting Montana communities?

Nonprofit leaders are uniquely positioned to help shape good public policy because they work directly with their communities and know what is needed. Federal supports to nonprofits are most effective when engagement is nonpartisan, evidence-based, and focused on practical solutions rather than politics.

The best public policy decisions don't come from Washington or Helena alone — they come from listening to people doing the work every day. Montana's nonprofit leaders understand the challenges facing veterans, families, seniors, farmers, ranchers, tribal communities, and small towns because they see them firsthand. That experience is invaluable — and is often not heard or even sought by Washington policymakers — and that needs to change. When we work together, we can develop solutions that are practical, fiscally responsible, and rooted in the realities of life in Montana — and the federal government can, and if I am elected, will be engaged as effective partners in this process. Simply stated — Montana's nonprofit leaders deserve to be heard, and deserve to be supported.

Ballot Initiatives

From the Montana Secretary of State, the following issues qualified for the 2026 general election ballot:

CI-132:

A constitutional initiative that amends the Montana Constitution to require that judicial elections remain nonpartisan.

CI-133:

The Montana constitution reserves to the people the powers of initiative and referendum. This act amends the constitution to protect this fundamental right from unjustified interference by the government.

I-194:

An act, if passed, limits the powers of artificial persons to those powers necessary or convenient as provided by law. These powers must exclude contributing anything of value to candidate elections, supporting or opposing political parties, or supporting or opposing state or local ballot issues.

MNA's Criteria for Engaging in Advocacy & Public Policy

MNA focuses on issues that affect the entire nonprofit sector or a vast majority of the sector, or that are determined to have statewide policy significance. The following criteria are used in considering whether MNA should engage in policy advocacy on a particular issue, including ballot initiatives:

- **Impact:** Does this issue affect the interests of the nonprofit sector in a significant way? Would our involvement advance our mission?
- **Support:** Is there, or do we reasonably anticipate there will be, general support among the members of MNA on the position to be taken?
- **Credibility:** Would MNA as an organization be perceived as a legitimately concerned and appropriate advocate for the position to be taken? Would our involvement draw on our expertise, positioning, and knowledge?

With these criteria, MNA determined that I-194 and CI-133 have broad enough impacts to the sector to take a position. CI-132 did not meet our criteria for MNA to take a position.

MNA's policy positions include the following:

- **Support:** The policy advances MNA's Policy Agenda.
- **Oppose:** The policy is in opposition to MNA's Policy Agenda.
- **Neutral:** The policy has mixed impacts or does not clearly advance or oppose MNA's Policy Agenda.

More information on MNA's advocacy and policy work, including our Policy Agenda, can be found at mtnonprofit.org/public-policy.

CI-132

What it is:

I-132, commonly referred to as “Montanans for Nonpartisan Courts” is an initiative that would amend the Montana Constitution to require that judicial elections remain nonpartisan. Specifically, the initiative would add one sentence to the state constitution, Section 12. Nonpartisan Judicial Elections. Judicial elections shall remain nonpartisan.

Type of initiative:

Constitutional initiative. The initiative would add new language to the Montana Constitution.

Impact on nonprofits:

CI-132 would preserve Montana’s 90+ year status quo of nonpartisan judicial elections by adding the nonpartisan requirement to Montana’s constitution, making it much harder for a future legislature to change it. The initiative relates to democratic accountability and judicial independence, issues that have broad impacts on the people and communities served by nonprofits.

Nonprofits with judicial-reform, civic-engagement, or other legal system-related missions may have the most direct stake in this initiative, as well as nonprofits who use litigation as part of their advocacy strategy.

MNA’s position on CI-132: NO POSITION

Nonprofits & Ballot Initiatives - Current Rules

CI-133 and I-194 both propose changes to the ballot initiative process in Montana. The following context is provided to help clarify the current rules for nonprofit participation in this process.

501(c)(3) nonprofits

501(c)(3)s cannot support or oppose candidates for public office or engage in any partisan political activity. 501(c)(3)s can legally express positions and urge voters to support or oppose ballot measures, including statewide initiatives, local efforts such as bond measures, and other policies put to a direct vote of the public. The IRS considers ballot measure work to be a lobbying activity because members of the voting public act as legislators when they vote “yes” or “no” on the legislation proposed in ballot measures. 501(c)(3)s may engage in a limited amount of lobbying under federal tax law. (Nonprofit Accounting Basics)

501(c)(4) nonprofits

501(c)(4)s, or social welfare organizations, may engage in unlimited political lobbying (including work on ballot measures) and some partisan work to support or oppose candidates for public office, but that type of activity must remain a secondary activity of the organization. 501(c)(4)s are not typically required to disclose the names of their donors. (Alliance for Justice)

Ballot Initiatives

CI-133

What it is

CI-133, commonly referred to as “Montanans Decide”, is an initiative that would amend the Montana Constitution to protect the ballot initiative process from unjustified interference by the government.

CI-133 requires impartial, predictable, open, and timely processes for ballot issues, including approving petitions and ballot statements, resolving legal challenges, and verifying signatures. It requires the state to allow ample time for signature gathering, prohibits disqualification of petitions because of minor or technical issues, allows voters to withdraw their signatures if they so choose, and prohibits the use of government resources to support or oppose a ballot measure.

Type of initiative

Constitutional initiative. The initiative would add new language to the Montana Constitution.

Impact on nonprofits

The protections included in CI-133 would ensure the ballot initiative process remains accessible to nonprofits and everyday Montanans by preventing government interference that drives up costs and increases legal risks.

Ballot measure advocacy can be an important tool for public charities to help create better laws for the communities they serve. Ballot measures are often used to tackle issues not adequately resolved by current state policy or that elected representatives may be hesitant to sponsor. (Alliance for Justice)

CI-133 would not change nonprofit lobbying or advocacy rules.

MNA's position on CI-133: **SUPPORT**



I-194

What it is

I-194, commonly referred to as “the Montana Plan”, is an initiative organized by the Transparent Election Initiative, to limit “the powers of artificial persons to those powers necessary or convenient as provided by law”.

The campaign is aimed at restricting “dark money” (political funding from undisclosed sources) in elections by prohibiting political spending by artificial persons, which include nonprofits, trusts, partnerships, corporations, trade associations, and unincorporated associations. I-194 doesn’t apply to political committees, individuals, or public corporations.

The initiative alters the powers of “artificial-persons” – the legal powers a nonprofit or corporation is allowed to exercise under Montana law – by eliminating political spending power from that category entirely. Specifically, powers of “artificial persons” would exclude: *contributing anything of value to candidate elections, supporting or opposing political parties, or supporting or opposing state or local ballot issues.*

The Montana Plan is intended to apply to corporations based in Montana or out of state – any entity that is doing business in Montana. The plan is also intended to apply to spending on local, state, or federal elections in the state of Montana. (montanaplan.org FAQs)

Enforcement is handled through the State Attorney General and the courts. A violation results in the forfeiture of all privileges to do business in Montana.

Type of initiative

Statutory initiative that would create a new state law. If passed, it would take effect January 1, 2027.

Impacts on nonprofits

501(c)(3)s are already prohibited from supporting or opposing candidates for public office, but they can currently participate in state and local ballot measures. I-194 would prohibit nonprofits, and all entities considered artificial persons, from spending on ballot measures or candidate elections.

Under I-194, 501(c)(3)s and 501(c)(4)s could use political committees (PACs) funded by voluntary individual contributions to engage in work on ballot measures. PACs are not subject to contribution limits for ballot measures but are subject to limits when contributing to candidates for office.

Super PACs, which are not subject to contribution limits, would continue to exist under I-194 but, under the initiative, would be prohibited from spending in Montana elections if they take corporate money. A Super PAC spending money on Montana races or ballot measures would have to disclose donors, and all must be individuals.

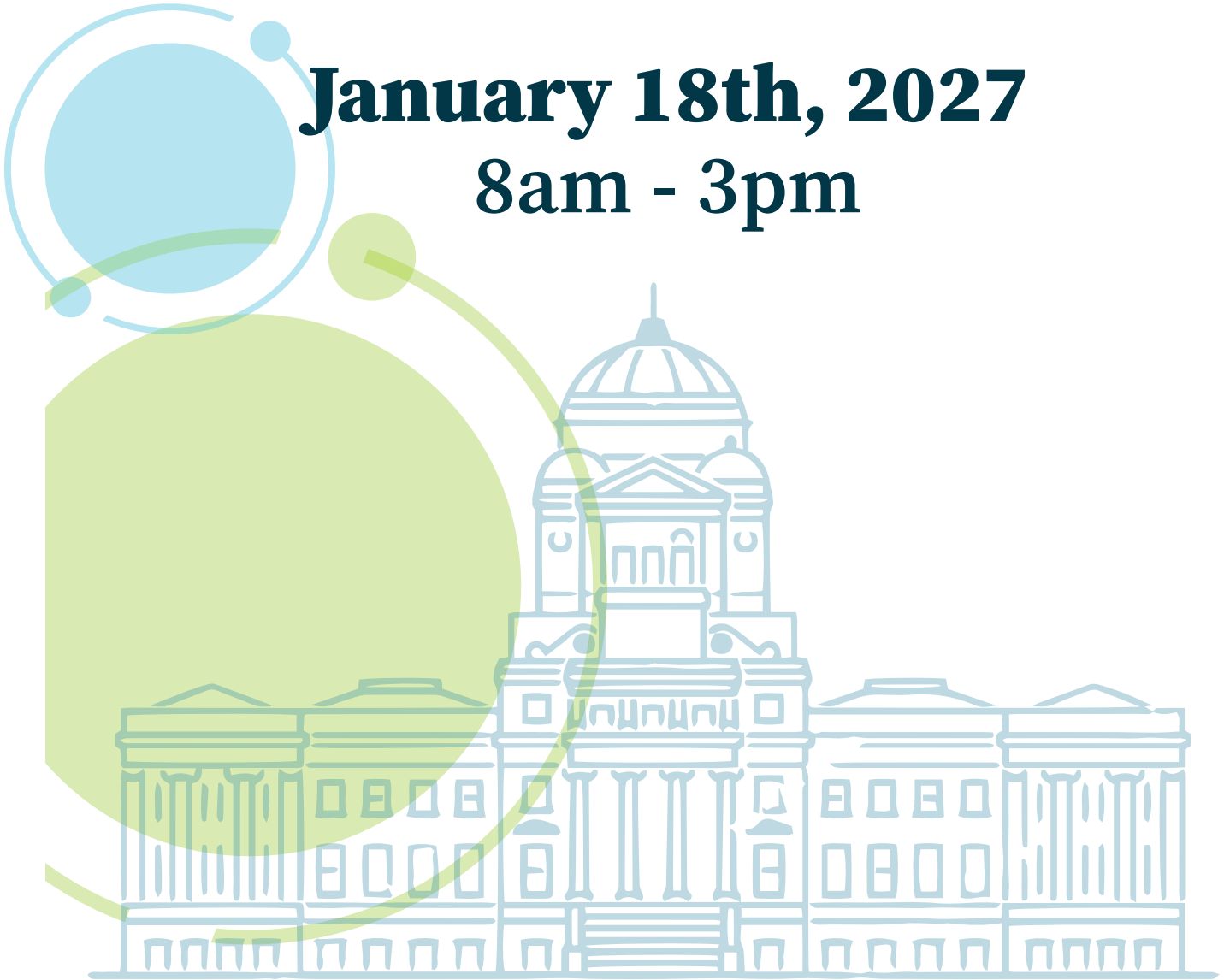
Under I-194, nonprofits face no new restrictions on nonpartisan public education or direct lobbying of legislators.

MNA’s position on I-194: NEUTRAL

Save the Date!

Nonprofit Day at the Capitol

January 18th, 2027
8am - 3pm



MONTANA NONPROFIT ASSOCIATION

mna@mtnonprofit.org

406.449.3717

mtnonprofit.org

7 W 6th Ave | Suite 610

PO Box 1744

Helena, MT 59624

TOGETHER we are a force for good.