

END OF SESSION OVERVIEW

69TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

2025



END OF SESSION MATERIALS

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MONTANA SENATE DEMOCRATS

49TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

AT A GLANCE

148

Senate Dem Bills
Proposed

389

Democrat
Sponsored Bills
Heard in Total

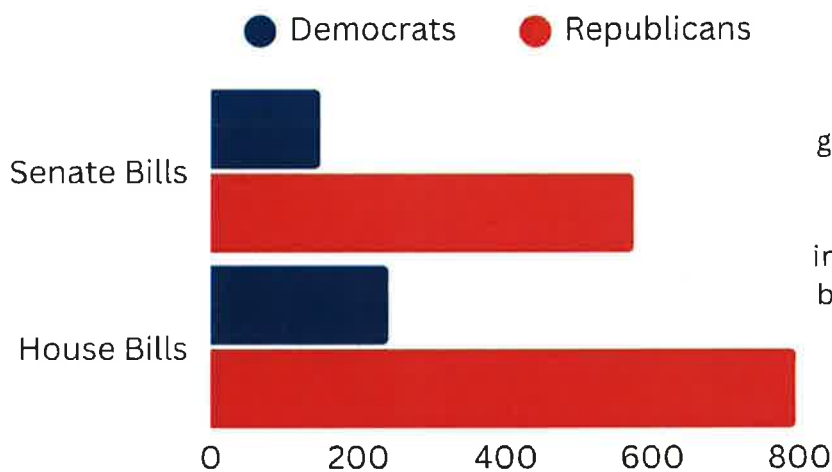
138

Democrat Sponsored Bills
passed the legislature
(HOUSE & SENATE)

1,761

Bills Introduced
and Heard in total

Republicans FLOODED our bill drafters with bills



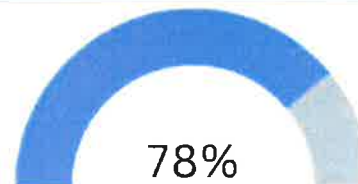
The majority party talks a big game about limiting government, but this session proved otherwise. They introduced 78% of all bills – overwhelming the process and expanding government reach into Montanans' lives.



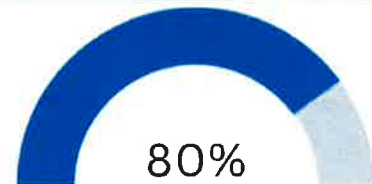
Of the 1,370 bills introduced by Republicans from both chambers, 576 had a fiscal note

Democrats FOUGHT back

Over all, Democrats stood strong and won. We defeated the majority of Republican attacks on our impartial courts and stopping their deeply unpopular push to make judges partisan. We protected the judiciary, our constitution, and Montanans' fundamental rights.



Senate Select
Committee Bills Killed



Bills Attacking our
Judiciary Killed

Republicans wasted a lot of time and tax payer money this session

\$544,478,000.00

Taxes that will be cut over the next biennium from the richest Montanans through HB 337

8

Bills attacking
Reproductive
Freedom

14

Bills attacking
our LGBTQ
friends

35

Bills attacking
our Impartial
Courts

203

Republican Bills
Killed in the
Senate



GENERAL TALKING POINTS

Democrats Delivered

Additional Scorecard Graphics [Here](#)

Healthcare

- Democrats delivered continued Medicaid coverage for more than 90,000 working Montanans, with no expiration date.
- Every Democratic vote was critical. This wouldn't have happened without us.
- Medicaid is our issue. We've led the fight to expand and protect it from the start.
- We stopped every attempt to cut, weaken, or roll back the program.
- This win keeps rural hospitals open, doctors in communities, and families covered.

Housing

- Montana faces a housing affordability crisis. Families, seniors, and young people are being priced out of their communities.
- Rising costs hurt families and local businesses, making it harder to hire and keep workers.
- Democrats delivered a bold, overdue investment in the Montana Housing Trust, originally introduced by Sen. Dave Fern and now included in the bipartisan GO Trust.
- This fund will help local communities create real solutions, from workforce housing to affordable options for families and seniors.
- We also passed targeted reforms to expand housing options:
 - ◆ Support for manufactured and factory-built homes
 - ◆ More tools for towns to invest in local housing
 - ◆ Zoning updates to allow smart, walkable development
- Together, these changes reflect core Montana values: local control, practical solutions, and the belief that everyone deserves a place to call home, a shot at the American Dream.

Montana Senate 2025 Report Card

Days Attended: 87



	Mid term	Final
Health Care Thanks to Democrats, Medicaid has been signed into law. We have protected healthcare for thousands of Montanans.	A	A
Affordable Housing Democrats delivered real progress on housing with bipartisan support and we will keep fighting to make homes more affordable for every Montanan.	B	B+
Property Taxes Democrats made Montana's property tax relief plan stronger, fairer, and more focused on the families who need it most.	C	B+
Strong Schools Democrats delivered major wins for Montana's public schools – securing critical investments in funding, teacher pay, and student opportunities that will strengthen Montana's future.	C+	B+
Protecting Freedom Democrats fought back against attacks on our freedoms and impartial courts by defeating major threats and protecting the rights Montanans depend on. The fight is not over, but our state is stronger because we stood up.	D	C+

Comments:

Senate Democrats were able to deliver better results by putting Montanans first.



Education

- We delivered real results for Montana's students, families, and teachers this session. Democrats led on education wins, including higher teacher pay and more support for young learners.
- The STARS Act passed because of Democrats, raising pay for beginning teachers and helping schools recruit and retain talent.
- We expanded early special education for kids ages 3–5.
- We passed inflationary funding increases to keep school budgets on pace with rising costs.
- We enabled schools to rehire retired teachers to mentor and support new educators.
- We expanded advanced opportunity programs to prepare students for college and careers.
- We invested in "Grow Your Own" programs to help local communities train future teachers.
- Democrats stood firm for Montana's students and kept education above politics. We worked across the aisle to make progress, but the work isn't done. Too many classrooms still lack the support they need. We'll keep pushing forward—because when we invest in Montana's kids, we invest in Montana's future

Special Interest Anti-Freedom Legislation

- Montana Democrats stood firm in defending the fundamental freedoms that Montanans hold dear: the right to privacy, the right to an impartial court system, and the right to live free from government overreach.
- When extreme bills threatened these freedoms, Democrats fought back — and won key victories. We stopped some of the worst attacks on our rights and preserved the constitutional protections that Montanans depend on every day.
- Throughout the session, we:
 - ◆ Blocked special-interest legislation that threatened Montanans' rights to free speech, government transparency, and personal privacy.
 - ◆ Defeated numerous Republican efforts to weaken Montana's impartial courts.
 - ◆ Protected Montanans' right to have judges who follow the law, not a political agenda.
 - ◆ Fought back against a wave of anti-freedom bills that sought to undermine the decisions of teachers, parents, and doctors.
- Montanans spoke clearly when they passed CI-128 last November, the citizen initiative that affirms the right to privacy and access to abortion care under our Constitution. In spite of that clear public mandate, we saw an alarming number of bills attacking abortion rights introduced this session.
- Democrats defeated some of the worst proposals, including HB 316, which would have opened the door to extreme restrictions on abortion, contraception, and fertility care. Unfortunately, many harmful bills still made it through.
- It is deeply disappointing that Republican politicians spent so much time ignoring the will of voters and wasting taxpayer resources, both during the session and in the costly litigation that will inevitably follow.



Courts

- Throughout this year's legislative session, there was a clear pattern: Republicans repeatedly attempted to politicize the courts, threaten judicial independence, and shift power away from the people and toward partisan interests.
- Their proposals were not solutions to any real problem Montanans asked us to solve. Instead, they were political power plays, out of touch with the shared values of fairness and freedom that Montanans expect.
- Fortunately, Montanans spoke up. They attended hearings, contacted their legislators, and made it clear they want impartial courts, not more political chaos. As a result, dozens of harmful bills were either defeated outright or died along the way. The worst proposals, the ones that would have fundamentally undermined our judiciary, did not pass.
- Montanans expect their elected leaders to solve real problems, not undermine the checks and balances that protect our rights.
- This session, lawmakers rushed through dozens of legally questionable bills, many of which are already facing judicial review.
- One of the Legislature's flagship bathroom bills is already being challenged in court.
- The urgency of protecting strong and independent courts has never been clearer.

Growth and Opportunity Trust

- The "GO TRUST" is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to respond to uncertainty and invest in Montana's long-term stability.
- Funded by COVID relief dollars and a state surplus, the GO TRUST makes smart, targeted investments that address Montana's affordability crisis.
- Democrats helped shape the fund to focus on what matters most: Affordable child care, Housing, Retirement security (pensions), and Infrastructure.
- Two Democratic-led proposals are included in the final plan: *Laura Smith's Early Childhood Endowment* to support families and child care access & *Dave Fern's Housing Fund* to expand affordable housing across the state.
- Democrats have championed sustainable funding for pensions and infrastructure for decades and this fund finally puts that vision into action.
- The GO TRUST is a response to rising costs and economic instability, using smart investments today to build a stronger, more affordable Montana for tomorrow.



PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

Montana's top priority for the 2025 session was to provide property tax relief. After years of gridlock and inaction, it was Democratic leadership and collaboration that pushed meaningful property tax relief over the finish line. Democrats introduced the core bills, strengthened others with targeted amendments, and delivered the votes needed to get them passed. Democrats strongly influenced the final product, from the \$400 rebate to the protections for local services and lower rates for working families. Without Democratic engagement, this relief wouldn't be reaching Montana families.

“Rising property taxes have been hitting Montanans in their pocketbooks for years. Republicans failed to solve this problem last session, despite Democrats raising the alarm on this crisis. We fought every step of the way to make these bills provide more relief and more affordability for everyday Montanans.”

If signed by the Governor, these bills will modify the rate at which residential properties are taxed, with lower taxes on primary residences and long-term rentals and higher taxes on second homes and short-term rentals. Democrats secured multiple amendments throughout the legislative process that will offer more relief that is more targeted at those who need it most.

Lowering property taxes was the Democrats' number one priority this session. In Week 1, Democrats introduced two bills that targeted property tax relief at middle-class Montanans. [HB 155](#) would have permanently lowered property tax rates for lower- and middle-value homes, while making the owners of multi-million dollar mansions pay their fair share. [HB 154](#) would have protected middle-class Montanans from future property tax spikes by making sure a person's property tax bill never exceeds an affordable percentage of their income. Both bills passed the state House with wide, bipartisan support.

HB 231 - Revise property tax rates for certain property (Rep. Jones) and SB 542 - Generally revise property tax laws (Sen. Galt)

Overview:

HB 231 and SB 542 coordinate with one another to enact a plan designed to *lower property taxes* for Montana homeowners and long-term rental property owners. This plan also seeks to minimize shifts of property tax burden onto small businesses. This is achieved partially by shifting the burden onto non-primary residences (second homes and vacation homes) and short-term rentals.



Toplines:

→ **\$400 Property Tax Rebate for Homeowners (OTO)**

- ◆ If you owned and lived in your home for at least 7 months in 2024 and paid property taxes on it, you may qualify for a **\$400 rebate** (or your total taxes if less).
- ◆ Applies to your **primary residence** only.
- ◆ You must apply online or by mail between **August 15 and October 1, 2025**

→ **Lower Tax Rates on Residential Property (Starting 2025)**

- ◆ HB 231 reduces property tax rates on residential properties, especially for:
 - Owner-occupied homes (HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION)
 - Long-term rentals (rented for at least 7 months a year).
- ◆ Tax rates will now be tiered based on a home's value compared to the **state median value**, with lower-value homes taxed at **lower rates**.

→ **Simplified Application for Lower Ongoing Tax Rates**

- ◆ If you qualify for the 2024 rebate, you'll automatically get the lower property tax rate for 2025–2026.
- ◆ Starting in 2027, you'll need to reapply to keep the reduced rate.
- ◆ Long-term rental owners can apply for reduced tax rates starting in 2026

→ **Appeals & Penalties**

- ◆ Property owners can appeal if their application for tax relief or a rebate is denied.
- ◆ Fraudulent claims come with strict **penalties**, including fines and repayment.

Resources:

[Property Tax Relief Overview Document](#)

[Property Tax 1-pager](#)



DEFENDING THE JUDICIARY

Republicans began the 2025 session pushing 27 "judicial reform" bills concocted by the **Senate Select Committee on Judicial Reform** after frustrations with court rulings blocking Republican-backed unconstitutional legislation. Of these 27 bills, Democrats were able to kill 21. Including the especially high-profile push to make judicial elections partisan, which was decisively rejected in both chambers on multiple occasions. You can view a comprehensive list of all judicial attacks and their statuses [here](#). Below are some of the Judicial attacks that passed the legislature:

SB 40 - Sen. Greg Hertz - Revise supreme court public records laws by opening deliberations and files to the public - Makes Montana the first state to open Supreme Court deliberations to public review after case conclusion. The deliberations of our Supreme Court members are largely laid out in the final ruling in both majority decisions and dissenting opinions. Rep. Stafman carried this bill on the House floor, claiming that it aligned with his open records bills from this session. This bill was amended to ensure that confidential information and intellectual property would remain sealed however, keeping deliberations secret allows justices to consider cases without external pressures and further protects our impartial courts.

SB 45 - Sen. Tom McGillvray - Create a judicial performance evaluation commission and system - Establishes a new commission to evaluate judges mid-term and before re-election. Gov. Gianforte amended the bill to remove a requirement to publish evaluations in the voter pamphlet to avoid influencing elections and dulling the overall effectiveness that Republicans hoped for.

SB 48 - Sen. Carl Glimm - Generally revise laws relating to Judicial Standards Commission complaints Allows public disclosure of formal complaints against judges that are currently kept confidential unless formal proceedings are launched. This will largely be used as a political mechanism to generate press stories. First, a public citizen files a meritless, politically charged complaint. Then, the citizen makes the complaint public using this law. Then, chaos around our judiciary ensues.

HB 39 - Rep. Millett - Repeal law disallowing parties from contributing to judicial candidates - HB 39 passed with ONLY Republican support, allows political parties to contribute directly to judicial candidates, injecting partisanship and big money into Montana's judicial elections. This deeply unpopular bill barely passed the Senate, undermines current judicial ethics standards, and should be challenged to protect the fairness and independence of our court.

Over all, Democrats stood strong and won. We defeated the majority of Republican attacks on our impartial courts and stopping their deeply unpopular push to make judges partisan. We protected the judiciary, our constitution, and Montanans' fundamental rights. Read more here: [Missoulian Article about the progress of judiciary bills](#)



DEMOCRATIC PRIORITIES

In the 2025 session, Montana Democrats championed real solutions to the challenges that real Montanans face every day. From the rising cost of housing to the quality of education, health care access, government accountability, and protecting our freedoms. On our first day, we laid out a plan to help ease the burdens Montanans face. Whether the bills passed or not, we pushed forward the conversation, made Republicans take a stand, and built a record of fighting for working Montanans. Democrats showed up for Montanans this session. The following are the priorities we listed on our first day, and the statuses of those coordinating bills.

Property Taxes - Montanans are being crushed by skyrocketing property taxes, especially seniors, working families, and small businesses. While Republicans protected wealthy property owners and giant out-of-state corporations, Democrats introduced targeted relief where it matters most. We worked to ensure that people can afford to stay in their homes and that tax fairness becomes a reality and not just a campaign slogan.

- **Homestead Exemption** - Provide immediate property tax relief by reducing the taxable value of residential properties and small businesses
 - ◆ [HB 155](#) - Rep. Thane - Revise class four residential and commercial property taxes - **(S) 2nd Reading Concur Motion Failed**
- **Fair Property Tax Rates** - Cut tax rates on middle-class homes and make owners of multi-million dollar mansions pay their fair share
- **Housing Fairness Tax Credit** - Prevent property taxes from rising above an affordable percentage of income for seniors, renters, and working Montanans.
 - ◆ [HB 154](#) - Rep. Karlen - Establish a housing fairness tax credit - **(S) Tabled in Committee**

Strong Schools - Our public schools are the backbone of our communities, but they've been underfunded and under attack. Families are worried about classroom resources, teacher shortages, and political interference. Democrats stepped up to fully fund public education, support students' wellbeing, and support the vital role teachers play in shaping Montana's future.

- **Strengthening K-12 Funding** - Fix broken funding for public schools and make the state pay its fair share.
 - ◆ [HB 266](#) - Rep. Muszkiewicz - Establish education inflation reconciliation process - **(H) Transmitted to Governor**
 - ◆ [HB 339](#) - Rep. Romano - Fund 6th graders in middle school at high school ANB rates along with 7th and 8th graders - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- **Supporting Students** - Remove barriers to learning and address students' mental health.
 - ◆ [HB 373](#) - Rep. Matthews - Revise lottery proceeds laws to dedicate to education funding - **(H) Missed Deadline for Appropriation Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [HB 338](#) - Rep. Romano - Revise laws regarding targeted early numeracy intervention - **(H) Transmitted to Governor**
 - ◆ [HB 551](#) - Rep. Romano - Eliminate reduced-price copayments for school lunch and breakfast - **(H) Returned from Enrolling**
 - ◆ [HB 385](#) - Rep. Romano - Establishing the school mental health promotion pilot program - **(H) Missed Deadline for Appropriation Bill Transmittal**



- **Finding and Keeping Educators:** Provide educators with the tools they need to start their careers, stay in the classroom, and end attacks on their profession.
 - ◆ [HB 499](#) - Rep. Crowe - Extend the Grow Your Own grant program **(H) Returned from Enrolling**
 - ◆ [HB 340](#) - Rep. Romano - Establish Montana's BEST program to bolster educator support and training - **(H) Sent to Enrolling**

Health Care - Montanans are tired of high costs, lack of access, and insurance red tape. Whether it's mental health care, hospital access, or basic coverage, people want to know they'll be taken care of when it matters most. Democrats fought to strengthen Medicaid, improve rural access, and put real people at the center of care.

- **Improve Medicaid** - Reauthorize expansion, eliminate bureaucracy, and enhance coverage for children, seniors, and tribal members.
 - ◆ [SB 522](#) - Sen. Pope - Generally revise medicaid laws to reduce or eliminate waiting lists - **(S) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [HB 230](#) - Rep. Caferro - Generally revise Medicaid laws - **(H) Tabled in Committee**
- **Strengthening Community Care** - Increase provider rates and tie to inflation. Overhaul private insurance barriers.
 - ◆ [HB 750](#) - Rep. Caferro - Provide for annual increase of Medicaid provider reimbursement rates - **(H) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [HB 399](#) - Rep. Karlen - Revise prior authorization laws - **Chapter Number Assigned**
- **Expanding Mental Health Care** - Secure stable funding for community-based care, school screening, homeless services, crisis response, and jail diversion.
 - ◆ [HB 237](#) - Rep. Reavis - Prohibit placement of sentenced defendants in the state forensic mental health facility - **(H) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [SB 521](#) - Sen. Pope - Directing DPHHS and OPI to develop a plan to expand mental health education to all schools in the state - **(S) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [SB 425](#) - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Prohibit incarceration of certain inmates out of state - **(S) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [SB 394](#) - Sen. Neumann - Provide for workers' compensation coverage of PTSD for first responders - **(S) Returned from Enrolling**

Affordable Housing- Rent prices are rising, homes are out of reach, and too many Montanans are one step away from losing their housing. We heard families, young professionals, and seniors across the state asking for help, and we responded. Democrats pushed for practical solutions to build, preserve, and protect affordable homes and give people a fighting chance.

- **Supporting Homeownership** - Expand the supply of housing, ensure affordability for mobile home residents, and address barriers to homeownership faced by tribal members.
 - ◆ [SB 501](#) - Sen. Smith - Establishing the Keep Montanans Housed Act - **(S) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [HB 305](#) - Rep. Karlen - Establish the mobile home park dispute resolution program - **(H) Missed Deadline for Revenue Bill Transmittal**



- **Protecting Renters** - Ensure landlords refund unused rental application fees and security deposits, and support landlords who rent to working Montanans.
 - ◆ [SB 421](#) - Sen. Boldman - Require the refund of certain residential lease application fees - **(S) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [SB 225](#) - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Provide income tax credit for renters - **(S) Missed Deadline for Revenue Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [SB 172](#) - Sen. Fern - Revise resort tax eligibility and allow use for workforce housing - **Chapter Number Assigned**
 - ◆ [HB 311](#) - Rep. Kortum - Require the refund of rental application fees - **(H) Transmitted to Governor**
- **Preventing Homelessness** - Invest in prevention services, fund rapid re-housing and rental assistance, and support emergency shelters
 - ◆ [SB 405](#) - Sen. Fern - Provide additional funding for the housing Montana fund - **(H) Tabled in Committee**

Farmers and Ranchers - Our ag workers are the heart of Montana's economy, but they're battling skyrocketing costs, restrictive contracts, and corporate overreach. We fought alongside them to protect their independence and ensure they got a fair shake. Democrats are proud to stand with the people who feed our state.

- Guarantee that ag producers have the right to repair their own equipment and increase transparency.
 - ◆ [HB 390](#) - Rep. Tuss - Provide for Montana right to repair agricultural equipment act - **(H) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**
 - ◆ [SB 414](#) - Sen. Morigeau - Generally revise laws relating to garbage feeding - **(H) Signed by Speaker**
 - ◆ [SB 509](#) - Sen. Curdy - Revise ownership laws related to farm equipment embedded software- electronic control unit, sensor, switches, and controls - **(S) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**

Indian Country - Native communities continue to face systemic underinvestment and cultural erasure. In this session, Democrats listened to tribal leaders and worked to protect families, support language and cultural preservation, and fulfill the state's constitutional obligations. We are committed to honoring sovereignty and building lasting partnerships.

- Strengthen MMIP task force and expand awareness, improve educational opportunities, restore tribal health manager, and extend the Montana Indian Child Welfare Act (MICWA)
 - ◆ [SB 147](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise Montana Indian child welfare laws - **(S) Returned from Enrolling**
 - ◆ [SB 181](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise Indian education for all laws - **(H) Signed by Speaker**
 - ◆ [SB 182](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise MT Indian language preservation program - **(H) Signed by Speaker**
 - ◆ [SB 180](#) - Sen. Susan Webber - Generally revise laws related to the determination of the best interests of the child in custody and adoption proceedings - **(H) Tabled in Committee**



Government Accountability - Montanans deserve a government that is transparent, listens to concerns, and serves *their* interests, not corporate donors or political insiders. We fought to open up public records, clean up legislative processes, and keep state contracts benefiting Montana workers. Our goal is simple: a government that works for Montanans.

→ Restore Public Access to Legislative and Governor's Office documents and prioritize Montana businesses for government contracting

- ◆ [HB 271](#) - Rep. Stafman - Provide that there is a limited executive privilege to the public records act - **(H) Returned from Enrolling**
- ◆ [HB 272](#) - Rep. Stafman - Provide that legislative bill drafting files are public records - **(H) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**

Child Care - Child care in Montana is far too scarce and too expensive for working families, forcing parents to choose between their jobs and their kids. Democrats tackled this crisis head-on by expanding scholarships and supporting providers, because trustworthy and accessible childcare shouldn't be a luxury.

→ Expand income-based eligibility for child care scholarships and make child care workers eligible for scholarships

- ◆ [HB 457](#) - Rep. Karlen - Revise best beginnings eligibility - **(H) Missed Deadline for Appropriation Bill Transmittal**
- ◆ [HB 456](#) - Rep. Karlen - Provide best beginnings scholarships to child care workers - **(H) Sent to Enrolling**

Reproductive Freedom - Ensure insurance coverage of IVF, guarantee access to contraception, and defend the right to access abortion

- ◆ [HB 565](#) - Rep. Stafman - Require health insurance companies doing business in Montana to cover IVF treatment, **(H) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**

Workers' Rights - Montana workers power our economy, and they deserve respect, fair pay, and time to care for their families. We pushed to raise wages, protect union rights, and bring paid family leave to more workers. Democrats believe in rewarding hard work—not exploiting it.

→ Provide paid family leave, ensure living wages, and defend the right to join a union for Montana workers.

- ◆ [SB 325](#) - Sen. Harvey - Creating family and medical leave act, **(S) Missed Deadline for Revenue Bill Transmittal**
- ◆ [HB 484](#) - Rep. Kortum - Revise minimum wage laws to provide increases, **(H) Missed Deadline for General Bill Transmittal**



THE GOOD, THE BAD, & THE BLOCKED: DEMOCRATIC WINS & SETBACKS

Key Dem Wins

The following bills, championed and collaborated on by Democrats, have successfully passed through the Senate this session. These legislative victories reflect efforts to advance meaningful policies and priorities.

→ **SB 107 - Sen. Susan Webber - Provide for human trafficking prevention education in public schools** - In a huge win for human trafficking education in schools, SB 107 passed the Senate. The bill would protect all Montanans, help potential victims steer clear of perpetrators, and help their peers do the same. While this is for all Montanans, it is no secret that young people on reservations go missing at higher rates. Native people make up 6.7% of the population in Montana but 30.6% of missing and murdered people. The Opposition referred to this bill as “woke.” Sen. Derek Harvey, D-Butte, offered a different interpretation of how the bill dealt with one concept of being “woke.” “There are parents that woke up without their kids in their bed,” Harvey said. “There are kids laying in places that they’ve never been before. And guess what? They woke up this morning in fear. So if we’re going to talk about woke, let’s talk about the reality of what these people are waking up to every day.”

→ **SB 172 - Sen. Dave Fern - Revise resort tax eligibility and allow use for workforce housing** - Every Montanan deserves the stability of a safe, affordable place to call home. Rising rents, housing shortages, and homelessness are leaving many Montanans without options. Democrats seek to expand affordable housing, protect renters, and address barriers to homeownership for all Montanans. “

Under the Governor’s watch, housing costs have risen to record heights,” says House Democratic Leader Katie Sullivan (Missoula), “Democrats are stepping up with bills that will make it easier for people to find housing that they can afford.”

Our proposals include those presented by Senate Minority Whip Susan Webber, “What’s good for Indian Country is good for Montana. Every Montanan deserves a fair opportunity to own a home. It’s the American Dream. My companion bills will begin to address barriers for homeownership on and off the reservation.” Senator Dave Fern is sponsoring **SB 172**, which would amend the current resort tax law to increase the population threshold for communities that can obtain a “resort” designation from the state, and allow an additional 1% tax to be collected and used for workforce housing.

→ **SB 188 - Sen. Christopher Pope - Revising solar energy policy laws** - In a major step toward energy independence and consumer choice, the Montana Senate has passed **SB 188**, sponsored by Senator Chris Pope (D-Bozeman), reinforcing Montanans’ right to energy freedom. The bill ensures that homeowners, businesses, and communities can access affordable, reliable, and locally-produced energy without unnecessary barriers.

“Montanans deserve the freedom to choose how they power their homes and businesses,” said Senator Pope. “SB 188 puts consumers first by ensuring fair access to energy solutions that reduce costs, promote innovation, and keep Montana competitive in the 21st-century economy.”



This bill is part of a broader push by Senate Democrats to lower costs for working families and small businesses. By putting Montanans first, SB 188 delivers real solutions that expand freedom, cut red tape, and protect consumer choice. SB 188 now moves to the House for further consideration. Senate Democrats remain committed to advancing policies that secure energy independence, lower costs, and keep Montana's economy strong.

→ **SB 278 - Sara Novak - Revise education laws to support advanced opportunities -**

This bill establishes the role of Advanced Opportunity Facilitators, who will coordinate between students, schools, postsecondary institutions, and other partners to expand advanced learning opportunities. The bill allows school districts to use a portion of their advanced opportunity aid to pay these facilitators and makes them eligible for a Quality Educator Payment. By establishing Advanced Opportunity Facilitators and making them eligible for Quality Educator Payments, the bill formally recognizes the work of staff who help connect students to career, college, and experiential learning opportunities in roles that often fall to teachers or counselors without added compensation.

Facilitators help ensure all students, regardless of background, can access advanced opportunities, reinforcing the educator's mission to provide equitable, personalized learning paths.

→ **SB 319 - Sen. Cora Neumann - Generally revise health care laws related to doulas -**

Montana's mothers and babies deserve the best start possible. Senate Bill 319 aims to expand access to doula care, which has been proven to reduce cesarean births by 37%, preterm births by 24%, and postpartum anxiety and depression by 64%. Doulas also help increase breastfeeding rates and reduce the risk of low birthweight. By certifying doulas and expanding Medicaid coverage for their services, this bill addresses maternal health disparities, particularly for low-income and rural women, ensuring healthier outcomes for Montana families and reducing healthcare costs.

→ **SB 271 - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Remove prohibition on certain compensation for collegiate student-athlete's name/image/likeness & SB 482 - Revise contract laws relating to student athletes -** This duo of bills finally brought our state's schools into the modern college sports arena. Senate Bill 482 requires written contracts for student-athlete usage of their name, image and likeness, while Senate Bill 271 removes an existing prohibition on schools directly paying student-athletes. The new law rolls back previous legislation that specifically prohibited Montana universities and colleges from paying their student-athletes. As an example, some colleges have begun to place student-athletes names on the back of jerseys sold to fans and the players then get a cut of that revenue. Sen. Boldman has continued to champion laws will allow Montana's largest schools to be competitive in the Big Sky Conference.



Moderate Republicans could not have passed meaningful legislation without Democrats' collaboration. The following R Bills have Montana Democrats fingerprints all over them. We should be proud of the collaboration we were able to achieve across the aisle.

- **HB 245 - Rep. Ed Buttrey - Revise the Montana HELP Act workforce development provisions and termination date** - Montana's Medicaid Expansion was set to sunset in June 2025. HB 245 extends this crucial program, safeguarding access to essential healthcare services for nearly 100,000 Montanans—including veterans, low-income workers, and rural communities. This program has been a lifeline, bolstering hospitals, clinics, and healthcare providers across the state while injecting millions in federal funding into Montana's healthcare system.
- **HB 231 -Rep. Jones - Revise property tax rates for certain property & SB 542 - Sen. Galt - Generally revise property tax laws** - these bills will modify the rate at which residential properties are taxed, with lower taxes on primary residences and long-term rentals and higher taxes on second homes and short-term rentals. Democrats secured multiple amendments throughout the legislative process that will offer more relief that is more targeted at those who need it most.

Lowering property taxes was Democrats' number one priority this session. In Week 1, Democrats introduced two bills that targeted property tax relief at middle-class Montanans. [HB 155](#) would have permanently lowered property tax rates for lower- and middle-value homes, while making the owners of multi-million dollar mansions pay their fair share. [HB 154](#) would have protected middle-class Montanans from future property tax spikes by making sure a person's property tax bill never exceeds an affordable percentage of their income. Both bills passed the state House with wide, bipartisan support.

- **HB 924 - Rep Llew Jones - Generally revise state finance laws** - This was a major proposal nearing final votes in the Montana Legislature, would establish a **\$900 million trust fund** to invest surplus state funds generated by recent surpluses and federal pandemic allocations to secure long-term funding for critical state needs like pensions, affordable housing programs, child care, and property tax relief. [Missoulian article](#)



All Senate Democrats' Bills Transmitted to the Governor

The following bills represent all bills that were proposed by Senate Democrats that were transmitted to the House for concurrence. In the 2023 session, Democrats had **28** of their bills signed in to law. This year, Senate Democrats have had **54** bills pass the legislature or signed in to law as of sine diet. Additionally, 84 House Democrats bills made it through the process.

[SB 25](#) - Sen. Janet Ellis - Revise election laws regarding disclosure requirements for the use of AI in elections

[SB 55](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Provide for legislative intent regarding streamflow information

[SB 64](#) - Sen. Pat Flowers - Clarifying calculation of legislator compensation and expenses during the interim

[SB 87](#) - Sen. Derek Harvey - Modify holidays for certain employees and create an annual floating holiday

[SB 88](#) - Sen. Dave Fern - Revise laws related to the publication process of certificate of need letters of intent

[SB 105](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise election laws related to electioneering at polling locations

[SB 107](#) - Sen. Susan Webber - Provide for human trafficking prevention education in public schools

[SB 147](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise Montana Indian child welfare laws

[SB 170](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Eliminate termination date of community health aide program

[SB 172](#) - Sen. Dave Fern - Revise resort tax eligibility and allow use for workforce housing

[SB 181](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise Indian education for all laws

[SB 182](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise MT Indian language preservation program

[SB 188](#) - Sen. Christopher Pope - Revising solar energy policy laws

[SB 190](#) - Sen. Derek Harvey - Allow water right holders to consent to waive adverse effects analysis in permit or change applications

[SB 208](#) - Sen. Laura Smith - Revise definition of "dependent child" in highway patrol, police, and firefighter retirement systems

[SB 211](#) - Sen. Cora Neumann - Revise emergency use of epinephrine in school setting to include nasal spray

[SB 224](#) - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Create Indigenous peoples day

[SB 233](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Adopting the interstate massage compact

[SB 237](#) - Sen. Dave Fern - Require revenue interim committee to make a recommendation about property tax rates

[SB 238](#) - Sen. Janet Ellis- Allow hunters to donate funds for archery equipment for disabled bowhunters



- [SB 243](#) - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Amend zoning regulations to allow taller buildings
- [SB 246](#) - Sen. Cora Neumann - Provide for Montana First Procurement laws and establish reporting requirements
- [SB 247](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Modify tax classification of shooting ranges
- [SB 252](#) - Sen. Dave Fern - Revise land use laws related to manufactured and factory-built homes
- [SB 257](#) - Sen. Laura Smith - Generally revise Smith River permit laws
- [SB 258](#) - Sen. Laura Smith - Revise school funding laws to clarify the legislature's authority related to inflationary adjustments
- [SB 271](#) - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Remove prohibition on certain compensation for collegiate student-athlete's name/image/likeness
- [SB 278](#) - Sen. Sara Novak - Revise education laws to support advanced opportunities
- [SB 303](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Require agency reporting on financial assistance to tribes
- [SB 311](#) - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Enhance legislative understanding of state-tribal relations
- [SB 319](#) - Sen. Cora Neumann - Generally revise health care laws related to doulas
- [SB 390](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Revise definitions in Clean Indoor Air Act
- [SB 394](#) - Sen. Cora Neumann - Provide for workers' compensation coverage of PTSD for first responders
- [SB 404](#) - Sen. Dave Fern - Require reporting of building permits for appraisal information
- [SB 412](#) - Sen. Laura Smith - Provide for fee waivers of government documents to former foster children
- [SB 413](#) - Sen. Laura Smith - Criminalize disclosure of certain explicit AI-generated media
- [SB 414](#) - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Generally revise laws relating to garbage feeding
- [SB 422](#) - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Generally revise laws relating to insurance coverage relating to cancer
- [SB 424](#) - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Revising the disabled veteran property tax assistance program
- [SB 428](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Generally revise county speed limits
- [SB 471](#) - Sen. Dave Fern - Generally revise vehicular traffic laws related to pedestrian crossings
- [SB 482](#) - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Revise contract laws relating to student athletes
- [SB 503](#) - Sen. Cora Neumann - Allow use of expired opioid antagonists
- [SB 508](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Generally revise driving under the influence laws for THC levels in drivers under 21
- [SB 518](#) - Sen. Derek Harvey - Transfer licensing of emergency medical providers to the department of labor and industry
- [SB 550](#) - Sen. Dave Fern - Revise taxation of certain telecommunications property
- [SJ 19](#) - Sen. Andrea Olsen - Joint resolution to study public transportation
- [SJ 25](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Joint resolution urging Congress to support MCOOL



[SJ 27](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Generally revise agriculture laws - Joint resolution urging Congress to act on brucellosis vaccines for livestock

[SJ 28](#) - Sen. Pat Flowers - Interim study resolution on the legislature's ethics processes

[SJ 29](#) - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Interim study resolution on coordinating efforts between OPI and DPHHS in addressing the impacts on children of prenatal exposure to meth and fentanyl

[SJ 38](#) - Sen. Mary Ann Dunwell - Provide for study of property taxes

[SR 14](#) - Sen. Andrea Olsen - Resolution to include Montana in the radiation exposure compensation act

[SR 111](#) - Sen. Willis Curdy - Senate resolution recognizing the service of 85 years of smoke jumpers

GOOD BILLS, BAD KILLS

The following bills represent key Democratic efforts that were blocked before they could be transmitted to the House for concurrence. These bills aimed to advance important policies but were ultimately halted in the legislative process. Of the 147 bills presented by Senate Democrats 92 of those were tabled in committees or killed on the floor in either chamber.

- SB 63 - Pat Flowers - Revise law related to the use of motion-tracking devices while hunting - **Tabled in (H) Fish, Wildlife, and Parks**
- SB 126 - Sen. Mary Ann Dunwell - Revise tenant move-out laws - **Tabled in (S) Judiciary**
- SB 173 - Sen. Dave Fern - Provide income tax relief for property taxes paid - **Tabled in (S) Taxation**
- SB 180 - Susan Webber - Generally revise laws related to the determination of the best interests of the child in custody and adoption proceedings - **Tabled in (H) Human Services**
- SB 187 - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise medicaid laws - **Tabled in (S) Public Health**
- SB 189 - Mary Ann Dunwell - Lower residential, commercial, and agricultural property tax rates - **Tabled in (S) Taxation**
- SB 225 - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Provide income tax credit for renters - **Tabled in (S) Taxation**
 - ◆ *Modeled after the successful federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC), SB 225 aimed to provide relief to Montana renters with a gross household income of less than \$45,000.*
- SB 294 - Sen. Andrea Olsen - Requiring public utilities to report a plan for 100% renewables - **Tabled in (S) Energy**
- SB 295 - Sen. Andrea Olsen - Restoring the right for injured worker to choose their own doctor. **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
 - ◆ *This bill would have restored Montanan's rights to choose their own doctor when they are injured at work. This bill was tabled in Business and Labor and then*



successfully blasted onto the floor, where it ultimately failed on 2nd reading.

Montanans deserve the freedom to choose their own doctor when they are injured at work rather than be at the mercy of insurance.

- SB 312 - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Generally revise laws for crime victims - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
 - ◆ *Sen. Morigeau first introduced this bill during the 68th Legislative Session, where it passed the Senate but fell short in the House. This session, Sen. Morigeau was more determined than ever to secure justice for victims of childhood sex crimes. This legislation would have eliminated the statute of limitations for these offenses, ensuring that predators can be held accountable, no matter how much time has passed. Ultimately, this bill was once again killed in the house with a 50-50 vote. It failed a reconsider motion 45-51.*
- SB 313 - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Revise laws relating to wage transparency - **Tabled in (S) Business and Labor**
- SB 325 - Sen. Derek Harvey - Creating family and medical leave act - **Tabled in (S) Business and Labor**
 - ◆ *Montana Family and Medical Leave Insurance (FAMLI) Act for our families, our businesses, and our future. This bill, based on legislation already enacted in many other states, would allow for up to 12 weeks of leave to care for themselves if they face a serious medical condition, to care for a family member facing illness, or to welcome a child into the home. During this leave, the insurance program would help cover a portion of the worker's wages and will keep that worker attached to the workforce.*
- SB 359 - Sen. Sara Novak - Revise traffic laws related to distracted driving - **Tabled in (H) Judiciary**
 - ◆ *In 2021, 25-year-old Chloe Worl from Anaconda tragically lost her life to a distracted driver on Montana's roadways. Montana remains the only state in the nation without a prohibition on cell phone use while driving. This bill would have addressed that gap, enhancing safety on our roads and ensuring that those who jeopardize that safety are held accountable.*
- SB 372 - Sen. Cora Neumann - Establish nurse safe staffing standards - **Tabled in (S) Public Health**
- SB 379 - Sen. Susan Webber - Revise laws related to state-tribal consultation - **(H) Died by Process**
- SB 405 - Sen. Dave Fern - Provide additional funding for the housing Montana fund - **Tabled in (H) Business and Labor**
- SB 406 - Sen. Christopher Pope - Establishing utility energy conservation efficiency standards - **Tabled in (S) Energy**
- SB 417 - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Generally revise laws relating to insurance coverage relating to obesity prevention - **Tabled in (S) Business and Labor**
- SB 425 - Sen. Ellie Boldman - Prohibit incarceration of certain inmates out of state - **Tabled in (S) Public Health**



MONTANA SENATE DEMOCRATS

69TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- SB 427 - Sen. Willis Curdy - Provide trapping setback distances for certain roads and trails - **Tabled in (H) Fish, Wildlife, and Parks**
- SB 461 - Sen. Sara Novak - Generally revise administration of drug and substance laws - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 500 - Sen. Laura Smith - Establish the Montana family legacy home act- **Tabled in (H) Natural Resources**
- SB 501 - Sen. Laura Smith - Establishing the Keep Montanans Housed Act - **Tabled in (S) Judiciary**
- SB 504 - Sen. Cora Neumann- Provide grants for permanent supportive housing facilities - **Tabled in (S) Business and Labor**
- SB 509 - Sen. Willis Curdy - Revise ownership laws related to farm equipment embedded software- electronic control unit, sensor, switches, and controls - **Tabled in (S) Agriculture**
- SB 522 - Sen. Christopher Pope - Generally revise medicaid laws to reduce or eliminate waiting lists - **Tabled in (S) Public Health**
- SB 523 - Sen. Christopher Pope - Revise reimbursement for medicaid services - **Tabled in (S) Public Health**
- SB 526 - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Establish the community health aide provider education grant program - **Tabled in (S) Education**
- SB 530 - Sen. Shane Morigeau - Generally revise insurance laws relating to nonrenewals and cancellation of certain insurance policies - **Tabled in (S) Business and Labor**
- SB 531 - Sen. Andrea Olsen - Provide tax credit for purchase of a firearm safe - **Tabled in (S) Taxation**
- SB 546 - Sen. Dave Fern - Provide income based tax credit - **Tabled in (H) Taxation**
 - ◆ *SB 546 would have provided a graduated tax credit system where working Montanans earning the least will be able to keep more earnings than those at higher income levels. This would create an income-based tax credit that exclusively targets lower- and middle-income taxpayers. In addition to providing relief to those who need it most, this proposal is the most likely to result in a balanced budget.*
- SB 565 - Sen. Laura Smith - Creating the Montana endowment for early childhood and related structure - **Tabled in (H) Human Services**



GOP's WORST

The following bills represent some of the most harmful GOP bills that passed the Senate.

Attacks on Montanans' Freedoms -

- [SB 27](#) - Sen. Ken Bogner - Generally revise marijuana licensing laws
- [HB 819](#) - Rep. Brandon Mitchell - Revise laws relating to flag displays in and on state buildings and grounds

Bad Tax Bills -

- [HB 337](#) - Rep. Brandon Ler - Revise income tax laws to lower income taxes

Anti-Abortion Bills-

- [HB 388](#) - Rep. Amy Regier- Create pregnancy center autonomy and rights of expression act
- [SB 154](#) - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Revise prohibition on sale or purchase of human body parts under the revised Uniform Anatomical Gift Act

Anti-Public Education Bills-

- [HB 284](#) - Rep. Caleb Hinkle - Establish an interim committee to investigate civil rights violations and censorship within the MUS
- [HB 400](#) - Rep. Braxton Mitchell - Enact the "Free to Speak Act"

Anti-LGBT+ Bills

- [HJ 10](#) - Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe - Resolution on sports laws
- [HB 121](#) - Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe - Provide privacy in certain restrooms, changing rooms, and sleeping quarters
- [HB 300](#) - Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe - Generally revise laws related to discrimination in education
- [HB 446](#) - Rep. Jedediah Hinkle - Revise indecent exposure laws
- [HB 471](#) - Rep. Jedediah Hinkle - Revise education laws related to human sexuality and identity instruction
- [HB 655](#) - Rep. Greg Oblander - Prohibit discriminatory action against persons providing adoption or foster care services
- [SB 218](#) - Sen. John Fuller - Provide for private right of action for injuries caused by certain medical interventions to treat gender dysphoria
- [HB 682](#) - Rep. Greg Kmetz - Generally revise laws regarding gender transition treatment
- [HB 690](#) - Rep. Bill Mercer - Generally revise laws related to child protection

Anti-Public Health Bills-

- [SB 256](#) - Sen. Dennis Lenz - Generally revise child abuse and neglect laws
- [HB 687](#) - Rep. Bill Mercer - Revise age of expanded Medicaid participants required to engage in community engagement activities
- [HB 888](#) - Rep. Jedediah Hinkle - Revise local board of health rules for isolation and quarantine



Bad Outdoors Bills -

- [HB 259](#) - Rep. Paul Fielder - Revise fish and wildlife commission techniques for gray wolf management
- [HB 554](#) - Rep. Brandon Ler - Remove FWP requirement to regulate wolves as furbearers or game animals

Bad State Land Bills

- [HB 676](#) - Rep. Brandon Ler - Generally revise state land and water laws

Bad Election Bills -

- [SB 226](#) - Sen. Mike Cuffe - Require petition submittals be dropped off within a specific timeframe
- [HB 179](#) - Rep. Braxton Mitchell - Revise election laws related to inactive voter status
- [HB 411](#) - Rep. Jane Gillette - Exempt agricultural property from open space levies
- [HB 413](#) - Rep. Jane Gillette - Revise election laws regarding residency
- [HB 711](#) - Rep. Brandon Ler - Prohibit selection of redistricting chair with recent major party contributions
- [HB 715](#) - Rep. Bill Mercer - Revise injunction laws
- [HB 719](#) - Rep. Braxton Mitchell - Revise election laws related to an elector's date of birth
- [HB 759](#) - Rep. Randy Gregg - Revise campaign finance laws

Anti-Immigrant Bills -

- [HB 214](#) - Rep. Caleb Hinkle - Provide for prosecution of state crimes for persons subject to federal immigration detention



BAD BILLS, GOOD KILLS

The following bills represent some of the most harmful legislation introduced in the Senate, successfully stopped by Democratic efforts to protect our values and priorities

- SJ 2 - Sen. Barry Usher - Resolution disapproving of Montana Supreme Court rules - **Tabled in (S) Judiciary**
- SJ 15 - Sen. Bob Phalen - Resolution on Obergefell - **Tabled in (S) Committee**
- SB 13 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Remove Supreme Court original jurisdiction for ballot review - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 14 - Sen. Barry Usher - Audit Office of Disciplinary Council - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 15 - Sen. Thomas McGillvray- Revising grounds for impeachment - **(H) Died on 3rd Reading**
- SB 20 - Sen. Jason Ellsworth - Prohibit retired judges from hearing constitutional cases - **Tabled in (H) Judiciary**
- SB 21 - Sen. Barry Usher - Allowing legislative and executive leadership to vacate a writ of mandamus - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 31 - Sen. Barry Usher - IOLTA Bill providing Interest back to client - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 42 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Provide for the partisan election of judges and justices - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 43 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Generally revise injunctive powers of the judiciary - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 44 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Generally revise laws regarding the separation of powers doctrine - **(S) Died on 3rd Reading**
- SB 49 - Sen. Barry Usher - Exempt lawyers serving in certain public offices from professional disciplinary measure and proceedings for actions taken while in office - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 66 - Sen. Mark Noland - Generally revise definitions relating to the judiciary - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 62 - Sen. Carl Glimm - Provide for phaseout of Medicaid expansion program - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 92 - Sen. John Fuller - Generally revise eligibility requirements to practice law in Montana - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 94 - Sen. John Fuller - Generally revise public sector unions law - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 114 - Sen. Bob Phalen - Provide for display of Ten Commandments in public school - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**



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69TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- SB 120 - Sen. Tom McGillvray - Provide for article V commissioner selection and oversight - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 128 - Sen. Jeremy Trebas - Revise county clerk and recorder election laws - **(H) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 129 - Sen. Jeremy Trebas - Revise voter registration laws to include party preference - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 136 - Sen. Carl Glimm - Prohibit consent as a defense for physician assisted suicide - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 145 - Sen. Becky Beard - Require open meetings and records for education membership organizations - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 146 - Sen. Becky Beard - Creating the Private Property Protection Act - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 156 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Generally revise evidentiary burdens related to child abuse and neglect cases - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 158 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Require judicial standards committee to send investigation referral to House of Representatives - **(S) Died on 3rd Reading**
- SB 164 - Sen. John Fuller - Revise offense of endangering the welfare of children - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 195 - Sen. Jeremy Trebas - Generally revise laws related to alcohol and minors - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 199 - Sen. Jeremy Trebas - Revise the Medicaid expansion program - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 204 - Sen. Greg Hertz - Sunset or reapprove existing voter approved property tax levies - **(S) Died on 3rd Reading**
- SB 205 - Sen. Greg Hertz - Revise laws related to voter approval for property tax levies and bonds - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 210 - Sen. John Fuller - Revise board of regents laws to remove statutory requirement for student regent - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 215 - Sen. Becky Beard - Revise the definition of public school system and requirements of school funding formula - **(H) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 222 - Sen. Greg Hertz - Revise laws related to lobbying prohibitions for public employees - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 272 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Create rules of conduct for child protection specialists - **(H) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 277 - Sen. Matt Regier - Revise laws for payroll deduction of union dues and political contributions by public employers - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 283 - Sen. Bob Phalen - Generally revise laws relating to wind generation facilities - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 298 - Sen. Theresa Manzella - Revise duties of the Secretary of State - **(S) Tabled in Committee**



MONTANA SENATE DEMOCRATS

69TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- SB 329 - Sen. Forrest Mandeville - Require employers to use e-verify for employment eligibility - **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 334 - Sen. Matt Regier - Providing medicaid expansion to able-bodied adults who comply with community engagement requirements - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 354 - Sen. Daniel Zolnikov - Prohibit purchase of soft drinks and candy with SNAP benefits - **(H) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 376 - Sen. Mark Noland - Establish right to work act - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 382 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Requiring acceptance of religious or conscience exemptions to immunizations - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 395 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Revise legal requirement of standing to maintain a lawsuit **(H) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 396 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Provide requirements for public library resources containing material of a sexual or graphic sexual nature - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 407 - Sen. Bob Phalen - Revise education laws to prohibit certain flags and banners in school and require phrase "In God we trust" displayed in each classroom of a public school - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 443 - Sen. Greg Hertz - Revise drug laws to regulate THC levels - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 474 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Require acceptance of religious and personal medical exemptions to required immunizations - **(H) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 451 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Revise laws related to public libraries and library services - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- SB 476 - Sen. Daniel Emrich - Defining separation of powers - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 494 - Sen. Theresa Manzella - Generally revise laws related to chemical abortion - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- SB 505 - Sen. Bob Phalen - Generally revise zoning laws to prohibit the construction of wind generation facilities - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- HB 30 - Rep. Lee Deming - Requiring the Supreme Court to apply a burden of proof for challenge to constitutionality of legislative act - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- HB 35 - Rep. Fiona Nave - Allocating judicial standards commission to the department of justice - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- HB 36 - Rep. Fiona Nave - Disallowing judge to serve as chair of judicial standards commission - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- HB 169 - Rep. Tom Millett - Revise judicial conduct laws - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- HB 176 - Rep. Shannon Maness - Require unlimited wolf hunting quota when population is at or above 450 wolves - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- HB 221 - Rep. Lukas Schubert - Revise election laws to require certain local elections to take place in even-numbered years - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- HB 258 - Rep. Paul Fielder - Requiring the extension of wolf hunting season - **(S) Died on 3rd Reading**



MONTANA SENATE DEMOCRATS

69TH LEGISLATIVE SESSION

- HB 302 - Rep. Anthony Nicastro - Revising punitive damages laws and procedures - **(S) Tabled in Committee**
- HB 377 - Rep. Nelly Nicol - Generally revise access by parent to child patient health care information - **(S) Died on 2nd Reading**
- HB 663 - Rep. Kerri Seekins-Crowe - Revise education laws related to diversity, equity, and inclusion - **(S) Tabled in Committee**

KILLED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

- SB 185 - Sen. Manzella - Constitutional amendment regarding qualified elector to require that only a citizen can vote
- HB 316 - Rep. Deming - Constitutional amendment to define person
- HB 460 - Rep. Millett - Amending the constitution to provide for electors of a county to call a grand jury
- HB 506 - Rep. Barker - Constitutional amendment revising selection of supreme court justices
- HB 507 - Rep. Barker - Constitutional amendment for sales tax to fund K-12 education
- HB 821 - Jodee Etchart - Revise vote requirement to enact constitutional amendment by initiative
- HB 822 - Jodee Etchart - Revise vote requirement to enact constitutional amendment by legislative referendum
- HB 841 - Rep. Barker - Constitutional amendment to use sales tax revenue for education
- HB 921 - Tom Millett - Constitutional amendment prohibiting distribution or receipt of child pornography



MONTANA AMERICAN INDIAN CAUCUS WRAP UP

The Montana American Indian Caucus solidified their presence in the 69th Legislative Session of the Montana State Legislature in both the Montana State House of Representatives and the Montana State Senate. Chairman Tyson Running Wolf (HD16), Vice Chairman Donavon Hawk (HD 72), Senator Susan Webber (SD 8), Senator Jonathon Windy Boy (SD 16), Senator Jacinda Morigeau (SD 46), Representative Mike Fox (HD 32), Representative Chip Fitzpatrick (HD 42), Representative Frank Smith (HD 31),

Representative Thedis Crowe (HD 15), Representative Jade Sooktis (HD 41), and Representative Shelly Fyant (HD 91) all joined MAIC Director Lance Four Star hitting the ground running at the beginning of the session. The MAIC met every week during the session along with over 254 participants in person and virtually whom represented themselves, state agencies, organizations, and lobbying groups.



MONTANA
AMERICAN
INDIAN
CAUCUS

The MAIC strengthened by including members of the State Legislature that attended MAIC meetings and coordinated with the Indian Caucus to ensure the success they have seen this session. Those Legislators of note are Representative Thomas France (HD 99), Representative Joshua Seckinger (HD 62), Senator Cora Neumann (SD 30), and Senator Gayle Lammers (SD 21). The MAIC thanks these and legislators that contributed to the success of the MAIC.

The MAIC began the session with important legislation delivered to the MAIC from the State Tribal Relations Interim Committee. House Bill 83, a bill to establish state special revenue account for Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force, sponsored by MAIC Chairman Tyson Running Wolf. HJ 1, a Resolution urging Congress to fully fund law enforcement in Indian Country, was delivered to the MAIC from the STRC which passed as well.

There were major wins amongst platform bills that were prioritized by the MAIC. SB 181, Indian Education For All, sponsored by Senator Jonathon Windy Boy who was also successful at passing SB 182, Indian Language Preservation Program and SB 147, the Montana Indian Child Welfare Act. MICWA, IEFA, and ILPP was important legislation for the Indian Caucus. Senator Susan Webber was successful at passing SB 107, Provide for Human Trafficking Prevention Education in Public Schools. One notable legislative victory includes the passage of SB 224, Create Indigenous Peoples Day, sponsored by Senator Shane Morigeau. It has taken over a decade to pass this bill.

The Montana American Indian Caucus focused on 146 bills with at least 35 bills introduced and passed by members of the MAIC along with 26 Support Bills introduced and passed by state legislative allies. Bills detrimental to Indian Country were not passed as well. The MAIC did an outstanding job in the 69th legislative session, representing Indian Country well.



MAIC Wins

SB 107 - Sen. Susan Webber - Provide for human trafficking prevention education in public schools - In a huge win for human trafficking education in schools, SB 107 passed the Senate. The bill would protect all Montanans, help potential victims steer clear of perpetrators, and help their peers do the same. While this is for all Montanans, it is no secret that young people on reservations go missing at higher rates. Native people make up 6.7% of the population in Montana but 30.6% of missing and murdered people.

The Opposition referred to this bill as “woke.” Sen. Derek Harvey, D-Butte, offered a different interpretation of how the bill dealt with one concept of being “woke.” “There are parents that woke up without their kids in their bed,” Harvey said. “There are kids laying in places that they’ve never been before. And guess what? They woke up this morning in fear. So if we’re going to talk about woke, let’s talk about the reality of what these people are waking up to every day.”

SB 147 - Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy - Generally revise Montana Indian child welfare laws - Sen. Jonathan Windy-Boy advances the Indian Child Welfare Act [SB 147](#). As of 2020, Native children were estimated to be up to 9 percent of the Montana child population and disproportionately 35 percent of the foster care population, according to the [Montana Judicial Branch Court Improvement Program](#).

Harkening the Montana American Indian Caucus Motto, “What’s Good for Indian Country is Good for Montana,” The Indian Child Welfare Act is considered the gold standard for child welfare due to its priority to keep children connected to their families, culture, and tribes. The bill garnered bipartisan support from Sen. Dennis Lenz-R, saying “The bulk of it could apply to all children.”

“It is really important for us to make sure that protection for our little ones, our future generation, are here to remain, are here to continue on this way of life,” Windy Boy said.

SB 182 - Generally revise MT Indian language preservation program: Knowing the important connection between connection with cultural heritage and physical, mental, and spiritual well being, the Montana American Indian Caucus expanded the Montana Indian Language Program (MILP). Since SB 182 public schools are able to access the MILP materials and develop Indigenous language curriculums for Native children. Many tribal members live in urban areas with low Native populations, so it is important that they are able to access language materials which are vital to strengthening their connection to their culture.

SB 182 also provides greater partnership with Tribal immersion schools such as the Cuts Wood school in Browning and the Nukusum school in Arlee, which teach core curriculum paired with their Blackfeet and Salish language.

SB 182 continues to recognize the vital link between language and culture. By continuing to preserve and teach future generations their ancestral language, MAIC ensures that Native children will have pride in their heritage.



SB 224 - Create indigenous peoples day - After several years of trying to get Indigenous Peoples Day recognized as a state holiday, it finally passed through both chambers! State of Montana employees may now take the second Monday in October off to celebrate Indigenous People's day.

SB 303 - Require agency reporting on financial assistance to tribes: The state of Montana receives federal money to support tribal affairs. In the past, tribes have been left in the dark about whether this money is available to them or how the money is spent. SB 303 is a proactive bill that tracks federal money for tribal affairs from the point of allocation through its spending and its report back to the federal government.

SB 303 helps to better identify money reaching the tribes and will help to make informed decisions about how this money is spent.

HB 83 - Establish state special revenue account for Montana Missing Indigenous Persons Task Force and HB 545 - Revise laws related to missing and murdered indigenous persons: Before HB 83 was passed, the Montana Missing Persons Indigenous Persons Task Force did not have a mechanism to raise funds. Now, they will have an account and the ability to build and raise funds to support their efforts.

HB 545 works in conjunction with HB 83 to ensure that the task force addresses murdered indigenous persons. It also changes the purpose of the group from task force to advisory council so they are able to give advice and guidance to tribal governments and other involved entities. The makeup of the advisory council removes the highway patrol member and adds a homicide investigator.

Indigenous persons are four times more likely to go missing as compared to their non-indigenous people. 80% of indigenous persons who go missing are minors. This advisory council breaks down barriers on reservations and brings key members of the 8 tribal nations, representatives from the Attorney General's office and MT DoJ, Indian Health Service, and the MMIP Coordinator.

HB 952 - Authorizing governor to enter into agreements with tribal governments relating to marijuana: Since passage of HB 701 in 2021, which regulated which legalized recreational cannabis, the tribes had have issues regulating marijuana on their reservation. HB 952 would allow the tribes to enter into compacts with the state of Montana similar to the gaming compacts. With this bill passing tribes will be able to raise revenue from the sale of marijuana on reservations as well as set regulations for dispensaries.

Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy, D-Box Elder, Chippewa Cree, made the issues with dispensaries in reservations clear on the Senate floor. He said while there are non-Indian dispensaries on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, the tribes have no means to regulate them.

"There is no agreement and there has been some hiccups as far as the tribe not being able to hold these dispensaries accountable," Windy Boy said.



Notable Bad Legislation for Indian Country

HB 623 - Revise laws relating to nuclear energy and HB 696 - Revise laws relating to nuclear energy: Members of the Montana American Indian Caucus sought to amend HB 623 and 696 to incorporate consultation between Tribal Nations and the state on nuclear energy facilities. The amendments allowed Tribal electors on reservations to vote on the proposed sites located within 50 miles of their location. Both amendments passed but were stripped from the bills in their committee hearings in Senate Energy Technology and Federal Relations.

Tribal Nations are often left demanding a voice at the table when decisions deeply affect the health and safety of their communities. The state should consult Tribal Nations at every step of the way to make Montana a better place for everyone.

HB 222 - Creating open wolf hunting season until the population is at or below a certain number & HB 176 - Require unlimited wolf hunting quota when population is at or above 450 wolves: These bills sought to significantly reduce Montana's wolf population by expanding hunting seasons and lifting hunting and trapping limits. These proposals undermine scientific wildlife management, emphasizing that wildlife decisions should rest within FWP rather than being politically driven.

For Native communities, this legislation could have adverse effects. These bills could harm the long-term sustainability of wolf populations, potentially affecting the delicate balance of ecosystems that are crucial for cultural practices tied to wildlife. Furthermore, wolves in regions near our reservations could be disproportionately impacted, disrupting local biodiversity and undermining our hunting and environmental stewardship practices. Caucus members argued that this legislation that would reduce the wolf population could interfere with state-tribal collaborative management efforts. Both of these bills were not passed.

HB 655 - Prohibit discriminatory action against persons providing adoption or foster care services - This bill will allow adoptive or family parent's beliefs to override the wishes of the birth parents. MAIC has done a lot of work to ensure indigenous children are able to maintain their connection with their culture. However, this bill disallows anyone to file complaints against adoptive or foster parents for enforcing their religious beliefs onto adoptive children.

As indigenous people continue to heal from the religious boarding schools, which took away indigenous people's language and culture, this bill allows religious organizations to reopen that wound.



ACTION ALERTS & NEWSLETTER

Senate Democrat Public Newsletter

This session Senate Democrats engaged with voters in a new way. We met 30,000 Montanans where they are at, with a weekly newsletter to highlight our wins and encourage engagement. Our newsletter had over 125,400 unique opens and a 41% open rate. [You can review past newsletters here](#)

2025 Action Alert Program

The Montana Democratic Party's Action Alert Program was an excellent resource for keeping thousands of Montana Democrats informed and active during the legislative session. These alerts provided timely updates on critical legislation and help build a stronger, more responsive democracy in our state.

Each day, staff pulled important bills (both good and bad) and consolidated them into a document that includes the bill, date, time, location of the hearing, and talking points. Staff at MDP send the email to a list of activists who then engage their own networks in a hub & spoke model.

The information on the alerts is designed to be accessible to those not necessarily familiar with the legislative process and to promote participation in the legislative process and grassroots organizing across Montana. Going forward, the party would like to engage with these constituents and prepare them for action before the legislative session starts, to encourage more folks to participate in a meaningful way.

Internal Sunday Rundowns

Weekly recap, upcoming messaging guidance, and opportunities for elected Senate Democrats.

1/5/25 [Pre Session](#): First Edition

1/12/25 [Week One](#): Rule, Rules Rules

1/19/25 [Week Two](#): Back to work! State of the State. Keep Politics Out of the Courts. And Ellsworth, oof.

1/26/25 [Week Four](#): Medicaid, Tax Proposals, and Courts

2/2/25 [Week Five](#): More Ellsworth, Courts, Medicaid, and Education

2/9/25 [Week Six](#): DOJ Referral, Health & Privacy

2/16/25 [Week Seven](#): DOJ Referral, Medicaid, and MEPA

2/23/25 [Week Eight](#): "Have you heard there is actually some good stuff happening in the Senate?!"

3/2/2025 [Week Nine](#): "Medicaid & Indigenous People's Day!"

3/16/25 [Week Ten](#): Transmittal Recap

3/23/25 [Week Twelve](#): Defense, Defense! Newsletter Gospel and send me your stories

3/30/25 [Week Thirteen](#): Medicaid is Official & Accountability Scramble

4/6/25 [Week Fourteen](#): Hold on to your seat! Gridlock break through and Board Marathon!

4/13/25 [Week Fifteen](#): The Budget is here. House bills galore.

4/20/25 [Week Sixteen](#): HB 2 and Tax time!

4/27/25 [Week Seventeen](#): *The final count down....*

5/2/25 Week Eighteen: Sine die (sigh)



BUDGET TALKING POINTS

The budget is a reflection of our values and priorities as a state. Montana Democrats are dedicated to passing a common-sense state budget that fully funds essential state services and makes meaningful investments in Montana's communities.

Toplines:

- After transmittal, Democrats in the House were able to pass amendments to the budget in committee and on the floor that improve Montanans' livelihoods.
- Democrats were also able to flex our power in committee and on the floor to block cuts to important programs and block policy that adds unnecessary funding to the Governor's office, as well as attempts on the floor to strip several of our amendments that were approved in committee.
- The budget is a reflection of our values and priorities as a state. Montana Democrats are dedicated to passing a common-sense state budget that fully funds essential state services and makes meaningful investments in Montana's communities.
- The Governor's budget falls short of what Montana's working families need. In critical areas, the Governor's budget proposals do not match the scale of many crises we are facing: property tax relief, healthcare, and public education.
- In all sections of the budget and the policy bills, Democrats have worked to hold the Governor and Republicans accountable and push for responsible and transparent spending.
- The Governor's income tax cuts passed in Speaker Ler's Bill [HB 337](#) will cost Montana over ONE BILLION DOLLARS by 2029. That money is coming out of our general fund, threatening funding for crucial programs that are vital for building a thriving economy.
- **Section A, General Government, Sen. Pat Flowers (Belgrade), Sen. Derek Harvey (Butte), and Rep. Luke Muszkiewicz (Helena)**
 - ◆ **Highs:**
 - Gave COPP more flexibility in auditing lobbying information;
 - Added funding authority to the Montana Heritage Commission for maintenance projects at Reeder's Alley, Nevada City, and Virginia City;
 - Blocked stripping funding for job services kiosks;
 - Eliminated the funding for a vague Recruitment and Retention program in the Governor's office; and
 - Blocked reduction of funds in the Office of Community Services
 - ◆ **Lows:**
 - Amendment to add positions to DOR for property appraisers failed



→ **Section B, Public Health & Human Services, Sen. Chris Pope (Bozeman), Sen. Emma Kerr-Carpenter (Billings), Rep. Mary Caferro (Helena), and Rep. Mike Fox (Hays)**

◆ **Highs:**

- Added grant authority for after-school programs, child mentorship programs, and food banks through TANF surplus funds via DPHHS;
- Secured 3% provider rate increases under Medicaid to ensure that Montanans who need these services can access them and providers can continue to afford to offer services to Montanans who need them most.
- Provided funding to Summer EBT programs at DPHHS;
- Added funding for positions for the Medically Needy program at DPHHS;
- Increased Medicaid reimbursement rates for air ambulance service providers at DPHHS;
- Added funding to the targeted case management program at DPHHS;
- Added funding to increase psych bed capacity and prioritize the youngest and highest need children at DPHHS;
- Moved the Tribal Relations Manager position back to the Director's office at DPHHS; and
- Removed funding at Montana State Hospital that prioritized hiring traveling nurses over Montana residents

◆ **Lows:**

- An amendment to add funds for evaluation and diagnostic clinics under DPHHS failed;
- An amendment to add positions for vocational rehabilitation counselors for patients at Montana State Hospital and for placement and support services for clients with Serious and Disabling Mental Illnesses under DPHHS failed; and
- An amendment to add funding for community crisis beds failed

→ **Section C, Natural Resources & Transportation, Sen. Janet Ellis (Helena) and Rep. Debo Powers (Polebridge):**

◆ **Highs:**

- Added previously-stripped funding to FWP back in for their hunter education program; and
- Blocked amendments to unnecessarily cut funding to various programs
- Fought to maintain funding for electric vehicle infrastructure funding.
- Pushed back on wasteful spending by rejecting a \$1 million shooting range in the Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks.

◆ **Lows:**

- Amendment to increase funds to the Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority under MDT failed



→ **Section D, Public Safety, Sen. Shane Morigeau (Missoula), Rep. Donavon Hawk (Butte), and Rep. Thedis Crowe (Browning):**

◆ **Highs:**

- Passed an amendment to restore pretrial diversion services at the Supreme Court; and
- Added 2 railroad inspectors to the PSC
- Fought against a \$10 million appropriation for a law enforcement training facility in Helena, a facility for which the Department of Justice has provided no basis for the amount of money they're asking for.

◆ **Lows:**

- Failed to add funding for after-school programs under the Montana Board of Crime Control at the DOJ;
- Failed to increase funding to OPD to the amounts requested by the Governor in his budget request;
- Failed to secure funding for the DOJ to defend unconstitutional bills passed by the Legislature; and
- Failed to strip funding for out-of-state prison transfers (CoreCivic)

→ **Section E, Education, Sen. Jonathan Windy Boy (Box Elder), Rep. Connie Keogh (Missoula), and Rep. Eric Matthews (Bozeman):**

◆ **Highs:**

- Secured funding to eliminate co-pays for reduced-price lunch in public schools.
- Strengthened the 1, 2, Free program that provides high school students with the opportunity to complete college credits tuition-free.
- Added funding for community-based STEM and robotics programs at OPI; and
- Blocked attempts to strip funding for community colleges, reduced-price lunches, and funding for the debt-free assistance program at OPI

◆ **Lows:**

- Failed to add funding cost-of-living increases for teachers residing in high-cost-of-living areas

→ **Section F, Long-Range Planning, Sen. Ellie Boldman (Missoula), Rep. Paul Tuss (Havre), and Rep. Scott Rosenzweig (Gallatin/Park Counties):**

- ◆ Democrats on Section F spent the session securing funding for various infrastructure and cultural projects in all corners of the state, ensuring Montanans have clean drinking water, functional wastewater systems, and safe roads and bridges, along with restoring funding for cultural projects and activities.
- ◆ Members of the entire committee worked to add back arts funding to HB 9 that was stripped after some programs did not testify in committee, but these amendments failed both in committee and on the floor.



→ Senate HB 2

- ◆ Senate Democrats were able to defend the hard work of the House appropriations and joint committees on HB 2.
 - Democrats worked to retain 3% provider rates for DPHHS.
 - The Senate president brought an amendment that would have made broad changes by removing funding for a wide range of educational and higher education initiatives previously approved by Section E, calling our priorities “pet projects”. It would have eliminated support for programs such as STEM and robotics, school lunch funding, the Montana Promise Grant, Montana 10, and dual enrollment at tribal and community colleges, among others. It also reduces or removes funding for new initiatives at MSU Northern, the University of Montana, and community colleges, while reverting several allocations back to the executive budget’s original levels. Overall, the amendment would have significantly reduced investments in K-12 and higher education programs across the state. Democrats made sure this amendment went down on the floor.
- ◆ Senate Democrats continued to build on a budget we can tolerate with priorities that support our communities.
 - Senator Morigeau ran the amendment to add a \$300,000 general fund appropriation to the Montana Board of Crime Control to increase grants to nonprofits operating after-school youth programs, supporting Montana’s children and helping provide safe, educational spaces for them to grow outside of school.
 - An amendment was passed to continue the state’s existing and successful pretrial diversion program.
 - Senator Kerr-Carpenter ran the amendment to make the state's CoreCivic contract one-time only. Though this amendment went down, it was essential for us to stand up for prisoners who were shipped away from Montana to an out-of-state for-profit prison in lieu of improving our own State Prison system.



69th LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN THE PRESS

Op-Eds:

- [Property tax relief for working and retired Montanans](#) - Sen. Pat Flowers & Rep. Katie Sullivan - December 24, 2024
- [Protect Montana Citizens' Right to Know How Their Government Works](#) - Sen. Andrea Olsen - December 20, 2024
- [American Indian Caucus on Citizenship in Question](#) - Sen. Susan Webber, Sen. Shane Morigeau and Sen. Jacinda Morigeau - January 20, 2025
- [Montanans Expect Their Government to People Before Politics](#) (Sen. Pat Flowers)
- [Democrats are Fighting for Freedom, Fairness, and Affordability!](#) (Sen. Pat Flowers)
- [Dave Fern's February Legislative Round Up](#) (The Electric)
- [Senate Democrats are Putting Montanans First and our Federal Delegation should do the same](#)- Many of Us
- [Paid Family Leave](#) (Sen. Derek Harvey)
- [Democrats are putting Montanans first by making Montana affordable for renters](#) (Sen. Shane Morigeau)
- [Making progress to put Montanans first | Daily Inter Lake](#) (Sen. Pat Flowers)
- [Montana Works Better When We Listen to Tribes - Flathead Beacon](#) (Sen. Susan Webber)
- [Montana property tax relief can't wait | Daily Inter Lake](#) & Missoulian (Co Authored by Sen. Fern, Hayman, and Dunwell)
- [Op-Ed: MT's Kids Deserve More Than the Bare Minimum - The Whitehall Ledger](#) (Co Authored by Sen. Novak & Rep. Romano)
- [Sen. Laura Smith: We're putting future of Montana first with Endowment for Early Childhood](#) (Sen. Laura Smith)
- [What can we do? Show up, speak out and build a stronger Bozeman](#) (Sen. Cora Neumann)
- [Guest Opinion: Montanans Deserve a Responsible, Bipartisan Budget.](#) (Flowers, Smith, Webber, and Morigeau)

General News:

- [Montana Republicans dominated the 2024 election. Things got 'weird' as some sided with Democrats](#)
- [What's the deal?' No deal, just collaboration, say 'The Nine'](#) (Daily Montanan)
"Flowers, cheered and derided as the "de facto president" of the Senate, said before the session started, the Democratic caucus and some Republicans felt disenfranchised based on committee assignments. "We found each other in that same space and recognized there were opportunities to work together on priorities for Montanans," Flowers said. Through the chaos, the working majority has demonstrated it can take the reins when it chooses, and although the coalition has elicited repeated protest from other Republicans, the dynamic isn't new at the Capitol.



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- [Flowers emerges as a leader by finding common ground • Daily Montanan](#)
- [Democrats and GOP 'Nine' propel state budget bill through Senate debate](#)
- [Sine Die Coverage: \(Daily Montanan\)\(Free Press\)\(KRTV\)\(Flathead Beacon\)\(MT Public Radio\)](#)

Taxes:

- [Lawmakers send second-home tax to governor - Montana Free Press](#) “We fought every step of the way to make these bills provide more relief and more affordability for everyday Montanans,” Flowers and Sullivan wrote.

- [Legislators give tearful goodbyes, reflect on service, pass the 'dean' torch - Daily Montanan](#)

But Senate Minority Leader Pat Flowers, D-Belgrade, said the outrage at the shift in taxes was hypocritical. He said that before the 2023 session, lawmakers received a memo from the Department of Revenue warning them that residential property taxes would increase if they didn't take action. “We did nothing. There was a tax shift,” Flowers said. “In some cases — in my case — my taxes doubled in Gallatin County. Doubled. Where was the outrage on that shift? So there's outrage now, because apparently the oil refinery is going to pay slightly higher taxes. But what about the shift that occurred in 2023 when our residents saw their taxes jack up? Where was the outrage?” “...(Our constituents) didn't ask us to maintain exactly the same taxes on oil refineries.” In the upper chamber, Sen. Mary Ann Dunwell, D-Helena, said legislators could go home and be proud of the work they accomplished on property taxes this session.

- [Montana Legislature looks to cobble together property tax relief - Daily Montanan](#) “In the end it's not perfect. It's not exactly what we would probably draw up,” Senate Minority Leader Pat Flowers, D-Belgrade, told the Daily Montanan after the vote. “But as I said on the floor, we felt like it was a good compromise. We didn't get everything we wanted, but we got some important things that we think will allow us to provide what we think are the services that Montanans want.”

- [Amid spending concerns, budget advances, major new trust proposed - Daily Montanan](#) Senator Chris Pope sees work ahead as well. He said he is proud of the work Democrats have done on their priorities, at times with help from nine Republicans in the Senate, whether it be increasing provider rates or help for housing.

Healthcare

- Defeating attempts to unwind Medicaid: [Montana Senate votes down bill to narrow eligibility for Medicaid expansion - KPAX](#) “What we are essentially doing is we are taking people who are working hard — they're hard-working Montanans in our small businesses, in all of our communities who are trying to make things work — and we're making it harder for them,” said Sen. Emma Kerr-Carpenter, D-Billings.
- [Medicaid Expansion Clears Senate](#) (Daily Montanan) With a wide margin, the Senate pushed Medicaid expansion over one of its last hurdles Thursday, albeit with a lengthy debate and questions about why at least one staunch opponent helped get it out of



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committee. Sen. Shane Morigeau, D-Missoula, described one of the people the program helps, a man who cuts cords of wood for a living, asks for no help because he's prideful, and is a simple person. "This guy is my dad," Morigeau said, after a long pause. "You know, without rural hospitals, I don't think my dad would be here."

→ **Without fanfare, Gianforte signs bill to continue Medicaid expansion program**

"It's our issue, 100%. Democrats have always voted on behalf of health care for people. And yes, the governor signed it, and that's awesome," said Rep. Mary Caferro, D-Helena, who sits on the House Appropriations Committee. "It's a recognition of how important the process, the services are for people."

→ **Post-traumatic stress disorder bill draws significant debate in Senate - KULR-8**

"When we pick up that phone and call 911, we expect these people to put their lives and their bodies and their families in harm's way to keep us safe," Senator Neumann said. "This is the least we can do."

→ **Montana Indigenous Peoples Day bill poised to become law - ICT News**

"It's a day that celebrates the ancestral lineage of all Montanans," he added. "It's a day that is shaped and molded by each community and how that community wants to celebrate each other."

→ **Hospitals' lobbying frustrates Montana lawmakers who sought to boost oversight** "The majorities that passed Medicaid expansion in February included every Democrat in the Legislature and many of the moderate Republicans." State Sen. Cora Neumann, (regarding SB 554) "the policies we have been presented with are not well thought out and raise concerns for me about government overreach."

Environment

→ **Winds of change: Montana's past and future collide in the Legislature's wind energy debate**

But Sen. Christopher Pope, D-Bozeman, said it is not in the state's best interest to create roadblocks for renewable development. "Fundamentally, the state of Montana needs to figure out how to reduce its energy costs," Pope said. "And we have not excelled in that category in the past 10 years, and our neighboring states, by adopting these new technologies where it makes sense, are reducing their power costs, which also then translate into stronger economies, more jobs, and more innovation and diversification of their economies."



Childcare

- “Childcare is one of the biggest challenges facing not only our communities but our businesses right now,” said Sen. Laura Smith, D-Helena. [Lawmakers look at ways to increase childcare in Montana - KTVH](#)
- [Poll: Majority of Montanans express concern over child care availability, affordability - KPAX](#) According to a [Montana Free Press-Eagleton Poll](#) conducted in January and February, 71% Montanans were concerned about the cost of child care. About 64% said they were concerned about the availability of child care in their community.

Housing Crisis

- https://www.kulr8.com/legislature/montana-tackles-housing-shortage-with-new-legislation-proposals/article_a652eb78-6629-5d91-a38c-29bb6423a944.html Senator Dave Fern of Whitefish, who is sponsoring the bill, explained the benefits. “We make a one-time investment of our balance, budget. It keeps on bringing dollars in. We make interest on the loans and we make interest as that money sits in the fund,” he said.

Reproductive Healthcare

- [In Rare Good Deed, Montana's Legislature Shut Down a Fetal Personhood Ballot Measure](#) State Sen. Cora Neumann (D) also raised that HB 316 threatened the accessibility of IVF and other fertility treatments, which are [naturally jeopardized by fetal personhood measures](#), because IVF requires the routine destruction of embryos. Since February 2024, when the [Alabama Supreme Court endangered IVF](#) by determining frozen embryos are “extrauterine children” whose destruction qualifies for wrongful death lawsuits, concerns about IVF have [unified](#) Republicans and Democrats in some state legislatures— including Alabama’s
- [Montana lawmakers spar over women's privacy during pregnancy care - The Victoria Advocate](#) “I’ll tell you what I’m scared of — private medical information getting sent to places where it shouldn’t be,” Sen. Smith said. “If an amendment to protect a woman’s right to privacy guts a bill, then what does that tell you about the bill’s goal?”
- ['Personhood' for embryos fails, other abortion bills head to governor's desk - Daily Montanan](#) Minority Leader Pat Flowers said Montanans don’t support the attacks against the right to privacy, and it was time to focus on other issues, such as tax bills. “Call it baloney or not, it’s in the Constitution, and it’s an important right,” said Flowers, D-Belgrade. Sen. Cora Neumann, D-Bozeman, said the bill would outlaw in vitro fertilization, and Montanans all love mothers and babies and want more of them in the state. Neumann also asked if the state should control men’s bodies. “If we’re going to try to have this type of control over women’s bodies, because the fetus is part of the woman’s body, are we also going to try to have this type of control over men’s bodies?” Neumann said. “Are we going to regulate ejaculation? This is what we’re talking about. We are talking about regulating the internal parts of bodies.” Sen. Laura Smith, D-Helena, said the bill could create a “legal quagmire” for any doctor who needed to provide medical



care to a pregnant woman who was experiencing a miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy. “This legislation would effectively tie doctors’ hands rather than allowing them to treat their patients without fear or prosecution,” said Smith, a lawyer.

Education

- [Montana Legislature passes \\$100 million bill to raise starting teacher pay](#) Sen. Sara Novak, said in a press statement on behalf of her caucus that Montanans “expect their leaders to prioritize our kids, our schools, and our future.”

Courts:

- [Republican efforts to recast Montana's judicial elections as partisan falls short](#) Sen. Laura Smith, D-Helena, likened the GOP’s multiple attempts at that policy proposal to a legislative “whack-a-mole. We will kill one judicial bill, and then another one pops up,” she said during a press briefing on Tuesday. “... We have found bipartisan success in killing bills that attack the judiciary. We know from every single survey that has been done in Montana that Montanans do not want partisan judges. They don't want politics in their courts. They want it to remain fair and impartial and I, frankly, think that we’re seeing that in those votes.”
- [Are changes to MT courts losing steam at the Legislature? - Helena Independent Record](#)
- [Some Judicial reform bills stalling, cast aside](#) (2/17/25 Daily Montanan) “several bills deemed most important by members of the interim committee have been foiled by a voting bloc comprising all Democrats, who chose not to participate in the committee because they did not want to legitimize its efforts, and a group of moderate Republicans.

Labor:

- **Defeated Right to Work and Anti-labor legislation**
[Bills to restrict unions go down in the Montana Legislature - Daily Montanan](#) Sen. Jacinda Morigeau, D-Arlee, said she sits on the committee where the bill was heard, and she learned some of the conversations about union activities amount to a one-minute phone call. “So how is that person supposed to clock in and out for that?” Morigeau said. Sen. Derek Harvey, D-Butte, said “We need to carry on what was established for us 100 years ago,” Harvey said. “So yes, we don’t have to fight to make sure that there’s outward swinging doors on buildings anymore — because unions got that. We don’t have to fight for the eight-hour workday — because unions got that. “But what we do have to continue to fight for is to ensure that the safeguards and protections and wages and benefits remain in place.”

Other:

- [Resolution asks for statewide interim public transportation study](#) “What I really want to get out of this study is the opportunity for us all to look at public transportation as true infrastructure that does so much for Montana,” Olsen said in an interview with the Daily Montanan. “I want people to see the connections between rural prosperity and the infrastructure that we make happen, like we used to make happen.”



→ **Montana colleges could directly pay student-athletes under NIL bills**

“I am a former college athlete, playing women’s soccer, and I know firsthand that supporting young people in athletics, at all levels, has larger rewards than the scoreboard,” Boldman said in a comment. “Data shows that the benefits to their mental health, physical well being, and long term happiness are worth the legislative commitment, and I am proud to be a part of bringing more opportunities for our college athletes.”

GOP’s Worst:

→ **GOP Silence on Montanans Struggling with Uncertainty Democrats say Trump cuts are creating chaos as federal workers lose jobs in Montana** Flowers said he found the delegation’s silence “unacceptable” while “Montanans, our friends and neighbors, are suffering with uncertainty.”

→ **MT Legislature passes bill blocking schools from disciplining pronoun, name usage - KTVH** “I am extremely concerned about the bullying impacts and the potential violence between students that this bill encourages,” said Sen. Laura Smith, D-Helena, during floor debate on April 10. “We are essentially endorsing harassing behavior against a very specific population.” “This is a mean, cruel bill,” Neumann said. “We heard earlier in the session, every bill draft costs us \$3,000, every day in this legislative body costs the state of Montana \$40,000. We have heard 25 anti-trans, anti-LGBTQ bills. What are we doing here? This is not our job. This is not what the people of Montana asked for. This is horrible.”

→ **“Tired of it”: Sen. Fuller comment draws ire, accusations of sexism in Senate** Sen. Jacinda Morigeau, D-Arlee, expressed frustration with how women in Senate chambers are treated. “We live in a society where words have additional connotations beyond their dictionary definitions,” Morigeau said. “So I must say that the use of histrionics has always been derogatory towards women.” Morigeau said she’s witnessed disrespect toward women time and time again during the Legislature. She said the body frequently consults its decorum rules for other matters, but not when it comes to the way women are treated. “I have seen in my 73 days in here, over and over, many times, the women in this body being put down, overtly, subtly,” Morigeau said. “And I just, I am tired of it.”

→ **Compromise income taxes cuts headed to governor’s desk - Missoula Current** Sen. Dave Fern, D-Whitefish, said he wants to see taxes as low as possible. However, while he was campaigning for office, he said he didn’t hear anyone asking for income tax cuts. With property tax relief still left to be hammered out by the Legislature — which Fern said he was expecting to be a costly endeavor — spending more money on income tax cuts is not the direction he wants the chambers to take.



END OF SESSION INFORMATION

George Wolcott will stay on as Chief of Staff through the interim and can assist you with interim committee duties and anything else regarding legislative business. He will be working under a hybrid model -- partially remote from Butte, MT, and in-person from Rm. 325 (Sen. Flowers' office) in the state Capitol. You can expect him to be in person for most interim and administrative committee meetings. If you would like to meet with him in person, please feel free to reach out to make arrangements and he is always available by phone.

Thai Nguyen from the Senate staff and Ciara Maxwell from the House Staff will transition back to MDLCC and can help you start planning for 2026 and any other electoral/campaign needs. Watch your emails for updates on

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69th Legislative Session

Across

- [3] The type of bird that Sen. Ellis saved from the legislation of HB 57
[4] Leader of the Montana House
[7] Legislative Services Code Commissioner
[8] a negative word to call children
[12] Where 150 elected officials meet for 90 days every two years
[14] Democrats pushed for more of this in government—sunlight, not secrecy
[16] Number of commandments Moses received that will NOT be required to be displayed in Montana classrooms
[17] Latin for “without day”. Montana Legislative Session speak for “let’s get out of here”
[18] How a former school teacher may characterize the Montana’s 69th Senate Democrats
[19] A person who elects a lawmaker to represent them
[21] 2027 Dean of the Senate
[22] What you buy last-minute on Valentine’s Day or the outgoing Senate Minority Leader
[23] Governor’s rejection of a bill

Down

- [1] Indian Country bill that keeps kids connected to their communities
[2] What the governor has done when a bill becomes law
[4] A container being phased out thanks to Sen. Kerr-Carpenter’s speedy doctor and Rep. Marler’s hard work
[5] Former Audubon lobbyist, or outgoing Helena Senator
[6] Green-eyed feeling at another’s success
[9] Phrase acknowledging a statement on the record without truly addressing it
[10] The senator with 59 bills introduced in the 69th session. (11 more than 2nd place)
[11] The Deadline term used for advancing bills to their second chamber
[13] Hometown of the Senate President
[15] Democrats fought to keep this program expanded for seniors and low-income Montanans
[20] Outgoing Senator who is suing the Federal Government

