

Respondent



15

Anonymous



1242:52

Time to complete



1. Name & office you are seeking *

Bob Carter, Candidate for House District 98.

2. Housing inventories are at all-time lows in many Montana communities. As a result, rent and home sales prices are at all-time highs. Local land use regulations and development review processes add unpredictability, delays, and extra costs to developing new housing stock, directly contributing to the housing shortage and lack of affordability. State law provides the framework and authority for these local regulations and review processes. As a state legislator, you will be asked to balance many competing interests in debates over land use policy. **Will you support legislation that streamlines and supports new housing, even if it means local governments are given less control over housing development?**

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I agree that adding new housing is badly needed, especially here in the Missoula area, and simplifying and streamlining the process always sounds like a good idea. That said, every step in the process was put there for a reason and without specifics on both sides of the issue I could not give an educated answer to this. That said, local control is essential to the efficient running of local governments. I do not feel a statewide approach to local issues is the answer. That which is appropriate for the residents of Carter county may not be appropriate for Missoula county and visa-versa.

3. Property taxes are the primary funding source for local government services and infrastructure and help to fund public education. Increasing mill levies and increasing property value assessments have left many homeowners and commercial property owners asking for relief. **How would you propose providing property tax relief to Montanans?**

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When looking at my own tax bill, 26% of my taxes were voted on, that is to say, those taxes were voted on and approved by the people. Would I like my property taxes to be reduced? Sure, but at what cost? Police? Fire? Roads? Schools? As a four term school board member, I know that our teachers are some of the highest educated, lowest paid professionals out there and it is everything we can do as a school board to balance our budget and maintain teacher salaries, or if we are lucky we can give teachers a 1% or 2% increase. Without alternative funding mechanisms for our schools and essential services, I am hesitant to say we should start slashing taxes. The Montana Department of Revenue already has several ways residents can reduce their property taxes including the Property Tax Assistance Program which can cut eligible property taxes by as much as 80%.

4. Montana is one of only a few states in which sellers of real estate are not required by state law to provide potential buyers with a statement disclosing the condition of the property. **Will you support legislation that requires sellers to provide buyers a disclosure statement?** *

Yes.

5. New housing and businesses require a source of water. Connecting to municipal water services is not always an option as cities are not always able or willing to extend infrastructure. In these cases, a water right must be secured through a process governed by state law and Department of Natural Resources and Conservation regulations. Reform is necessary as securing a water right is often costly, uncertain, and time-consuming. This ultimately hurts consumers and our growing communities. **Will you support legislation to streamline water right permitting processes?** *

Yes, under the right circumstances, but I would need to hear more specifics from both sides of the issue. Once again, local control is the key; what is right for some localities may not work in others. We need to recognize that over the next century water will continue to become a resource of increased scarcity and value and the process of securing water rights needs to be carefully considered.

6. One in five homes in Montana is serviced by an onsite septic system. If properly installed and maintained, septic systems are a safe and cost-effective means of waste disposal for homeowners and businesses. Some regulations on septic systems are enforced by local health departments, and enforcement is inconsistent. For instance, how bedrooms are counted for determining what size of system is necessary and how nonconforming systems are handled varies. **Will you support legislation that brings greater consistency to enforcement of regulations on existing septic systems?** *

Yes. As a former Sewer & Water District board member, I know how essential it is to have access to clean water and a properly maintained septic system can be a part of the solution.

7. REALTORS® believe that private property rights are fundamental to our free-market system and are a cornerstone upon which this nation was founded. Our United States and Montana Constitutions recognize and protect the right to own property. A strong economy depends upon preserving the right to freely own, use, and transfer real property. **If elected, what approach will you take to balancing private property rights with public interests?** *

Private property rights should generally be respected and take precedence unless there is an overwhelming public interest to challenge that right. Let's use the following scenario: A section of public land is wholly surrounded by private land. Should the public have the right to access that public land? Should this private landowner have the right to exclusive access to this section of public land? If forced to allow public access to the land, should the landowner be compensated? What about "corner crossing?" As an avid outdoorsman, hunter and angler these are issues I take seriously. Entire books have been written on the subject and law classes are taught on this topic, thus I don't think I could do it justice here.

8. The National Association of REALTORS include sexual orientation and gender identity anti-discrimination language in their code of ethics. Montana does not prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity. **As a state legislator would you support legislation to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and /or gender identity?** *

Absolutely.

9. Treasurer's Name, Address and Phone Number *

Barbara Berens, 3010 St Thomas Dr Missoula, MT 59803, 273-1243

10. Will you accept PAC contributions? *

☐ Yes

☒ No

Thank you!

We appreciate you taking the time to complete our survey so that we might better understand your position on key issues facing our community. The committee will be evaluating surveys received and responding within a few weeks regarding next steps.