

Respondent



24

Anonymous



9140:26

Time to complete



1. Name & office you are seeking *

Willis Curdy, State Senate District 49

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 some local land use regulations and development reviews stifle the ability of local builders to deliver housing. Some of Montana's zoning and subdivision laws were written decades ago and do not reflect changes in people's attitudes, technological improvements or present day living arrangements. . In several recent sessions, the Legislature has changed a portion of subdivision or zoning law without understanding the impact of those changes on other portions of subdivision or zoning law. Between these recent changes and the outdated subdivisions laws, its time to make what might be considered to be a significant overhaul of the laws. A number of counties and cities are currently working together to propose changes to our subdivision and zoning laws. From what I've seen, Montana local governments realize that changes need to be made. I encourage them to propose changes and then work with the 2023 Legislature to make necessary revisions to these laws. Let's make the rules so that they can be applied consistently throughout the state.

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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For years, the Montana Legislature has been giving tax breaks and tax reductions to various tax classifications. In several cases, the resulting tax shift has left local governments with less traditional sources of revenue causing those local governments to rely more and more on property taxes. This is not sustainable for residential and commercial property owners. In addition, the Montana Legislature needs to better fund its public schools. Public school revenue requests make up the single largest portion of most property tax bills. School districts regularly ask for levies to fund technology and building upgrades. Montana could put together funding packages for school districts to apply for technology grants and/or a state rebate for local communities who pass bond issues to rebuild/remodel their schools. This could save local property tax payers a significant amount of money. Every two years, Montana appraises/revalues all residential and commercial property. Last year's appraisals showed a significant increase in the value of property in most Montana communities. With the rise in valuations, property taxes rose in conjunction with those valuations resulting in hundreds of dollars increases in taxes for most Missoula area property owners. The Montana Legislature could have mitigated the property tax increase like it has done on previous occasions. This did not happen. My hope is that the Legislative interim revenue committee puts together proposals for the 2023 session to deal with the property tax problem. CI-121 proposal is NOT the answer, This initiative will result in a huge tax shift to agricultural and commercial property. Lastly, many local property taxpayers could help themselves by keeping abreast of bond and mill levies proposals. Some of our property tax problems are self-inflicted.

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?** *

I think it would be reasonable to work toward a disclosure statement. I would be amenable to look into it and work to make buying and selling property more transparent.

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?** *

Montana' Water Court is in the final stages of making final decrees on water rights adjudication in river basins throughout Montana. As the Vice-Chair of the Montana Legislature's Water Policy Interim Committee (WPIC), I have been pressing the water court to get this done so that all water right claims are settled. Once water right holders claims are identified in each basin, then the Department of Natural Resources Water Resources Division can speed up the process of administering the transfer of water rights between buyers and sellers. Our committee continues to review the Division's water right transfer process and the Division has responded by working on streamlining this process. WPIC is beginning to look at potential legislation for the 2023 session. The committee would welcome comments on any proposals streamlining the permitting process. Drought and the rapid development of various Montana communities has put a premium on water availability. Montana communities need to find potential water sources and if needed, purchase the right to that water from current water rights owners much like Missoula County recently did in the Lolo area. Montana needs to work on expanding water storage capacity where it can realistically do so as a way to assist growing communities in their search for additional water.

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?** *

I agree, As was mentioned in Question 1, consistency in the enforcement of regulations is important. I am currently working with a neighbor whose permit for an addition to their home is being denied due to the County's request for a larger, unneeded septic system. The property owner is not increasing the number of bathrooms but the county insists on a \$30,000 septic renovation. Is this family being treated the same as other construction permit requests or is the requirement based on something other than existing septic regulations? Currently, the Target Range Sewer and Water District has been providing significant grants to the Target Range community members to remove obsolete cesspools and older septic systems. This has enhanced the water quality in the Target Range area. Montana needs to develop more of the independent sewer and water districts that are a significant distance from municipal septic facilities. I realize this is not a part of the question, but with the

growth of communities outside of municipal areas these projects would protect Montana's water quality.

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?** *

I support private property rights and an individuals right to own, use and transfer property. Action taken by the state or local government which could impact the value of private property should result in the owner being fairly compensated for a potential loss. That said, neighbors should be able to ask for relief if a land owner's activity jeopardizes the health, safety and welfare of the community or conflicts with Montanan's constitutional right to a clean and healthful environment. Designing reasonable and enforceable zoning regulations are critical. Reaching this balance can be tricky due to competing self interests, however, I believe we can get there. Private property rights are enshrined in Montana's "Declaration of Rights" and therefore are tantamount to the public interests.

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?** *

Yes I would. Housing discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals is not a Montana value. Housing discrimination against any class or groups should not be tolerated.

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

Peggy Christian, 11210 Kona Ranch Road, Missoula, 59804

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.

