

Respondent



29

Anonymous



44:21



Time to complete

1. Name & office you are seeking *

Zooey Zephyr - MT House District 100

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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Not necessarily. While we certainly need to build more housing units, we also need to work to ensure that affordable housing units are being built. If we simply deregulate and leave the results to the fair market, we will continue to see what we see now—exploding house prices and an influx of short-term rentals as folks look to make a profit off of tourism and Missoula's housing bubble. As County Commissioner Josh Slotnick said when the Larchmont proposal was being considered, we cannot simply build our way out of this housing crisis. So while we want to encourage new housing (I would like to see Missoula City Council's work on re-zoning include spaces for more multi-family homes), I also believe that the state needs to allow for local governments to mandate affordable housing through tools like inclusionary zoning (which are not, by themselves solutions, but are part of the toolkit local governments need to ensure that housing affordable exists for the people working the jobs in the community).

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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I think of property taxes the way I think of health care premiums. The more payers you have in the pool, the lower the cost for everyone. With that in mind, we need to be encouraging new homes, while also ensuring that those new projects don't come with property tax write-offs, so that those new properties are actually contributing to the tax pool. Beyond that, I am open to looking at ways to prevent property taxes from increasing beyond the means of homeowners (e.g. possible limits on how much property tax can increase without a resale, connecting increases to cost-of-living changes, and looking for other revenue sources such as tax from marijuana sales, taxes on short-term rentals, etc.)

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?**

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Yes. Buyers need to be informed about potential issues with the property, and that is even more true given the current housing crisis.

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?**

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Unclear. I will need to research this topic more; however, I believe that we should be incentivizing cities to connect new homes to municipal water. Our public utilities are incredibly important, and while every home that cannot connect to municipal water needs to be able to connect to their own, the priority should be figuring out how new homes can effectively connect to municipal utilities.

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, so long as the regulations are both consistent & fair.

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?** *

My core philosophy in regards to the housing crisis in Montana is that the people who work the jobs in your community should be able to put down roots in the community if they so choose. One one hand, that means having access to private property. On the other hand, that means that it is in the public interest to ensure that *affordable* housing is available. Leaving Missoula's housing solely to the free-market has led to a situation in which housing prices are increasing at a rate far beyond Missoula's wages, and units that go for sale are often being purchased as investment properties and short-term rentals. One of the ways in which public interests can be prioritized is by looking at short-term rental laws, and regulating that industry in such a way that people are encouraged to have long-term rentals, thereby decreasing costs of rentals and leading to a population more likely to be able to save money & afford a home. Additionally, the legislature can look at the state's landlord-tenant laws, as well as Montana's affordable housing trust fund, for ways to ensure that the people working the jobs in local communities are able to get into the housing market if they so choose. Because if the people in the community cannot afford to put down roots in the community through home ownership, then all of the community gems will quickly deteriorate and be nothing more than tourist attractions.

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 be the first trans woman and the first openly bisexual person to be elected to the Montana legislature, and working on laws the strengthen protections for LGBTQIA+

people would be one of my many legislative goals.

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

Zooey Zephyr - MT House District 100

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.