



# **2011 BILLINGS AREA COMMUNITY POLICY**



# **Energy**

## **Responsible Energy Exploration and Development**

Responsible energy exploration and development on public and private lands are crucial to resolving our nation's energy crisis and building Montana's economy.

## **Natural Gas Development**

We believe that natural gas development should be explored and may be beneficial to stimulating the state's economy. We recognize that coal bed natural gas is an abundant resource that holds great potential for development. Other sources for natural gas include landfills, sewage treatment and animal waste. We will support legislative efforts that seek to encourage environmentally responsible natural gas development and deployment.

## **Publicly Owned Energy Facilities/Infrastructure**

We generally oppose any public competition in the private business arena. Any attempts by the State of Montana, or local governmental entities, to own or operate existing or new power generation facilities/power distribution infrastructure, unless in a public-private partnership, must be subject to the most stringent cost benefit analysis to the stakeholders.

## **Other Alternative Sources**

We support renewable hydro power generation systems as well as wind, solar, fuel cells and others as long as they are effective and all costs are disclosed.

## **Oil Refineries**

We support the growth and greater production of existing area oil refineries.

## **Public Policy**

Consistent public policy and prudent tax policy needs to occur for long-term planning, production, processing and distribution.

## **Carbon Sequestration**

We support responsible Carbon Sequestration Legislation and Rule Making if technology is available and affordable, and is justified by a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.

## **Coal Reserves**

We support the development of coal reserves in Southeastern Montana. We recognize the importance of coal production in providing economic benefits and opportunity to local communities in this region and the spillover benefits that result for the Billings area. We also recognize the significance of coal production to the state economy and the financial assistance it affords local communities throughout Montana. Coal demand is rising and we believe Montana has an opportunity to participate in this market increase. The responsible and timely development of new coal mines will provide a much needed economic boost to Montana. We therefore support efforts that will enable new coal production to occur, including the development of railroad infrastructure and securing access to federal and state-owned coal reserves.

## **Coal Bed Natural Gas Water Discharge**

Recognizing that water is the lifeblood of Montana and recognizing that coal bed natural gas production brings up volumes of this precious resource in the daily operation of energy production, we support water management practices based on sound science that is based on DEQ and EPA standards. Further, we support practices that provide for beneficial use of this water resource whenever feasible. Because of the complexities of individual land use, landowner preferences, and water quality and quantity, we also support the implementation of a toolbox approach to water management. The toolbox approach allows the operator and landowner to use sound science and knowledge of the land to develop site specific management plans that will maximize beneficial uses, protect the environment and allow the economic benefit of energy production.

## **Taxation**

### **Tax Increment Finance and Business Improvement Districts**

We support the ability of Local Governments to establish tax increment finance and business districts that seek to promote economic development, infrastructure expansion and development, and taxable growth. The districts need to be established in cooperation with, and possibly benefit, other tax entities such as local school districts, cities, and counties. We oppose any changes in the Business Improvement Districts rules and regulations as may be proposed by the Montana Department of Revenue and support being a part of any coalition that may be formed to oppose changes in the rules and regulations. We also will oppose laws, rules or participation which may be proposed by the Montana Department of Revenue, the Montana legislature or others that limit or hamper cities' and counties' abilities to fully fund, adopt, and use Tax Increment Finance Districts.

### **Expansion of the Resort Tax Authority/Local Option**

We support the removal of resort tax limitations which would allow for all communities in Montana to determine whether or not they want to implement this tax, and for what purposes. In the event that expansion of the resort tax fails to receive legislative support, we support local option taxing authority. Either expansion of the resort tax or local option taxing authority should have local voted authorization and purpose, a sunset provision, substantial property tax relief, and should be used primarily in the community in which it is generated. Accordingly, we need to have legislation that contains all of the elements listed above:

1. It will give the local government entity the power to implement a local option/resort tax if approved by a vote of the people.
2. The tax must be for a stated purpose, on specific goods and services and must contain a sunset provision.
3. There must be a substantial portion of the tax collected that is returned to the property owners as property tax relief, however the tax bases need to be revisited if the new tax is used to lower property taxes.
4. A portion of the tax collected may be shared with rural government entities using some formula for calculation and distribution.

### **Statewide Sales Tax**

We support a statewide sales and use tax with the current constitutional cap of 4%, primarily as a replacement tax and as part of a broader tax reform plan.

### **Fees**

We believe fees must be tied to services rendered, not created as a replacement for lost taxing authority. Therefore, they should reflect the cost of providing that service. We also believe that powers that rest with local authorities, such as tax abatement, should remain within the local jurisdiction and should not be assumed by the Montana Department of Revenue.

### **Property Taxes**

We support basing property taxes on assessed value, not acquisition value. Additionally, we believe that a six year cycle for reappraisal is too long, and support putting all property on a four year cycle for reappraisal, with approximately one fourth of all property reappraised each year.

### **Business Equipment Taxes**

We support continuing reduction and elimination of the business equipment (personal property) tax. The state now provides tax replacement to local governments that lose revenue from the equipment tax's elimination and we support continuing the loss of revenue offset.

## **Healthcare**

### **Reform**

Now that Congress and President Obama have enacted broad healthcare reform and we are moving into implementation, there is a responsibility to share with our federal and state policy makers, what aspects of reform work as intended, where there are unintended consequences and what aspects need legislative change. This will likely be an ongoing process for many years into the future.

### **Reimbursements**

We believe in fair government reimbursements to healthcare and human service providers that at least cover the cost of providing services. Covering costs of providing service will protect against cost shifting to private sector payers, thereby reducing the cost of employee coverage for the business community. For instance, uncompensated care resulting from uninsured folks inappropriately using a hospital's Emergency Department as their Primary Care access point is a very costly source of cost shifting. We support the healthcare industry's position on issues such as:

1. Hospital Provider Fee, Nursing Home Bed Tax, Medicaid Direct Care Wage Increases, and Inter-Governmental Transfers for both hospitals and nursing homes
2. Air ambulance payments for hospitals, and
3. Physician payments.

### **Increased Health Insurance Coverage**

We support allowing companies to band together and form Small Business Health Plans, which can negotiate lower prices and better choices than small businesses can find on their own. We also support legislation that encourages more Americans to save for medical expenses tax-free by expanding Health Saving Accounts and allowing those with Flexible Spending Accounts to roll over unused balances to pay for future medical expenses. We support enacting refundable tax credits to increase health insurance coverage for employees and support programs such as CHIP for children through private sector and government efforts. To cover more employees, we support exploration of options such as tax credits/incentives, HSA's, and AHP's.

### **Affordable and Accessible Healthcare**

We encourage the healthcare industry to work closely with the education and business communities to explore ways to reduce the costs of healthcare services while maintaining and improving the quality of care and the level of access for consumers. The United States has the world's best healthcare system, but it is being priced out of reach for more and more American citizens. Five straight years of double-digit health insurance premium increases have pushed the number of Americans who lack coverage to over 45 million. Companies struggle to find healthcare plans that provide adequate coverage and are still affordable. We recognize that most healthcare coverage is provided by employers, although statistics indicate that rising costs are making it increasingly difficult for employers to afford to maintain that coverage. Because of the dire societal effects caused by lack of healthcare coverage, it is essential to make it easier for employers and their employees to afford the healthcare coverage they need and the quality they deserve.

### **Consumer Education**

The consuming public will benefit from education efforts to inform people about healthcare options, healthy lifestyle choices, various insurance plans, and appropriate ways to initially access healthcare services. Our goal is for consumers to be able to make informed decisions before making such choices.

### **Regulations**

Governmental regulations of the healthcare industry, though well-intended, significantly drive up the costs of providing healthcare services and coverage while also complicating the delivery and processing of services and products. The public is best served by balancing the goals of regulation with the associated costs of compliance. For instance, HIPAA benefits consumers by protecting personal information, but compliance is costly and time-consuming.

**Technology**

We support the funding and implementation necessary to bring about an Information Technology (IT) revolution to the entire healthcare industry. Increased use of IT and Tele-Medicine will lower costs while increasing efficiency and access, especially in rural areas. In particular, we support the ongoing efforts of HealthShare Montana that is developing interconnectivity among Montana's healthcare providers.

**Administration**

A major source of cost savings would be streamlining the delivery of healthcare services and the processing of insurance applications and claims, including a reduction in the number of privacy notices and standardization and uniformity of insurance applications, forms, and claims processing.

**Higher Education**

We need to strengthen the stature of higher education in Billings through collaboration with our local healthcare industry and business community. Collaboration involving Montana's higher education institutions will benefit consumers of healthcare services, our local economy, and employees. Strengthening the stature of higher education in Billings will assist the healthcare industry in recruiting and retaining physicians and other healthcare professionals. An important aspect of the strategy should be strengthened linkage between healthcare and the MSUB College of Allied Health as well as the Physicians Assistant Program at Rocky Mountain College which is recognized as one of the top 15 PA programs in the nation, to explore proposals such as a medical school in Billings. Increased partnering with the WWAMI program should be promoted to offer incentives to attract physicians and other healthcare professionals to the Billings area. Continued development of the healthcare workforce is critical to the long-term sustainability of our community. As such, sustainable public support should be given to the two-year, four-year and graduate-level programs that exist in Billings at the MSU Billings College of Technology and at the MSU Billings College of Allied Health Professions.

**Bioscience Research and Development**

We recognize great potential in local economic development focused on the highly technical field of bioscience research and development. Collaboration involving the healthcare industry and RMC and MSU-B are particularly essential to success in this area. Progress in encouraging technology transfer for the bioscience fields will be possible if consultation services and educational programs are developed to promote access to the federal grants and contracts programs of the Small Business Innovation Research initiatives. These are grant programs that many small businesses are not trained to compete for through the peer review process. Success in bringing in grants through these programs will stimulate the needed start-up for small businesses. To encourage tech transfer in the biosciences, we support State funding of match money for SBIR grants, which was approved during the 2009 legislative session.

**Workforce Needs and Shortage**

The current focus of workforce needs and shortages is in the field of nursing, and much teamwork lies ahead in tackling this important issue. Many other types of ancillary professionals in healthcare require attention as well. Higher education is critical in providing education, training, and opportunities for degree advancement. We support development of a mechanism to access federal dollars for workforce training and equipment, including onetime needs and new programs. Training for incumbent and entry-level healthcare workers should be considered. Also, in rural areas there should be examination of potentially using alternate types of providers offering healthcare services, such as nurse practitioners.

**Housing Affordability**

Availability of housing for all income levels is absolutely necessary for balanced and healthy growth of our community. Available and suitably located housing is critical to workforce recruitment and performance. Workforce housing is affordable when people who work in the community can obtain decent, safe housing without undue financial burden and when home ownership is an achievable aspiration for a broad range of households.

**Mental Health**

We support improved government payment for mental health services, which would benefit both providers and patients.

**Community Crisis Center**

We support the Community Crisis Center, a healthcare safety net facility aimed at evaluating people typically for a combination of mental health and substance abuse problems. People who come to the Community Crisis Center are evaluated and then directed to the appropriate treatment, if necessary. The Community Crisis Center is a partnership of St Vincent Healthcare, Billings Clinic, Riverstone Health and the Mental Health Center who all believe that the Community Crisis Center will save money and provide better, more focused treatment for the patients. This facility also has great potential for rural outreach. Passage of the public safety mill levy in June 2010 should provide financial stability for the Community Crisis Center, and efforts should continue to obtain funding from state and federal sources.

**Public Health and Safety**

The federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act provides significant new funding to improve health, save money and reduce demands on our health system via the creation of the Prevention and Public Health Fund. The best way for Montana to capitalize on Fund resources is to invest in public health service delivery across the state. During the 2009 legislative session, the legislature began to address inequities in the public health system by passing HB 173, a demonstration project that will help ensure a strong foundation for local public health through national accreditation. We support the continuation of building a strong public health infrastructure as well as a fiscally responsible approach in the creation of policies, programs and services which keep people healthier now, thus reducing the demand for medical care throughout their lives. These include evidence-based interventions such as:

- Chronic disease risk reduction measures via tobacco use prevention, physical activity promotion and sound nutrition policy;
- Promoting seatbelt use;
- Modernizing and strengthening remedies for substance-related and distracted driving abuses; and
- Increasing immunization rates.

**Medical Liability and Tort Reform**

We support medical liability and related tort reform. Medical malpractice lawsuits have pushed medical liability insurance premiums so high that doctors and clinics are limiting or even closing their practices, leaving patients without care. During the 2005 legislative session, nine reform bills were passed into law, and indications are that premium rates for health care providers have somewhat stabilized, although the number of liability insurance carriers has not increased. We will continue to monitor this important aspect of public policy and support reform legislation as needed.

## **Transportation/Managed Growth**

### **Transportation Corridors**

We support improvements to transportation corridors locally and regionally that will enhance economic development and quality of life. Corridors should include non-motorized components as well as aesthetic enhancements whenever possible. Corridors presently identified are:

- a. East End Entrance to Billings from the Interstate
- b. Inner Belt Loop/Zimmerman Trail
- c. Montana Highway 3 (Billings to Great Falls)
- d. Interstate 90
- e. S. Billings Blvd/King Avenue E.
- f. King Ave. West
- g. Main Street in the Heights.
- h. South 27<sup>th</sup> Street

### **Subdivision and Zoning Regulations**

We support subdivision and zoning regulations that encourage efficient, orderly development, while allowing flexible and innovative development strategies. We support the use of carefully considered incentives to encourage developers to invest in amenities such as parks, trails and open space, and to consider developments in designated redevelopment areas, such as the EBURD.

### **City-County Planning**

We support the combined City-County planning department to best plan for the future growth of the greater Billings community. A cohesive City-County growth strategy is critical to provide for an efficient development process. We support appropriate County zoning, subdivision and development standards for areas close to the City limits that are compatible with City standards and reflect the likelihood that these areas will eventually be annexed into the City. Proactive community planning, which articulates a community's vision for future development, requires the inclusion of private property. We support the rights of private property owners and encourage substantial public notice to encourage the participation of property owners in community planning efforts. We do not believe that it is necessary or practical to require explicit permission from property owners when planning on a regional level.

### **City Annexation Policy**

1. Pursue a long term policy that would include an annual tracking of growth within the city as well as in the 5 year limit area. We support actively pursuing alternative sources of revenue for cities and towns through the legislative process.
2. We support City annexation of new development as a means to manage growth. The City provides infrastructure that supports economic development and City zoning and development regulations provide the guidelines for orderly, efficient growth.
3. Encourage the City and County to support additional funding for the City-County Planning Department.

### **Public Utilities**

We support strategic, cost effective investment in public utilities as a way to manage the pattern of City growth and to discourage sprawl and encourage compact, space-efficient growth.

### **Quality of Life Amenities**

We believe that proactive planning and investment in quality of life amenities, such as parks, trails, historic districts, preserved open space, and recreational and cultural facilities is crucial to attracting economic investment and maintaining a vibrant work force.

**Public and Alternative Forms of Transportation**

In this era of traffic congestion, high gas prices, climate change, health concerns, and fiscal constraints, federal, state and local transportation funding has reached a crossroads. We support investment in a more diverse transportation system that provides viable choices to walk and bike, use public transportation in addition to driving, and will lead to a far more efficient use of our transportation resources. We support expanding bus routes to include service to and from the airport. We also feel that we need to develop our trail system for the economic and healthy community benefits that result from active transportation (to work and school and for leisure).

**Air Service**

Air Service must be maintained and in Billings even with challenging marketplace conditions and stresses on the airline. We will work to increase needed direct flights.

We support the continuation of EAS subsidies. The 1978 Airline Deregulation Act promoted the continuation of the EAS, stating, "The maintenance of a comprehensive and convenient system of continuous airline service for small communities and for isolated areas, with direct federal assistance, where appropriate, is necessary."

**Eminent Domain**

Condemnation is a tool that government can use to acquire private property when a parcel is necessary to complete a project that is deemed to be for the public good. We recognize the inherent conflict between private property rights and government's power of eminent domain. While we staunchly support the rights of private property owners, we support the use of condemnation when the following criteria have been met:

1. The condemned property is needed to complete a public infrastructure project that was identified through an open public process.
2. The proposed project is necessary to facilitate the orderly growth, safety, and economic development of Billings.



## **Workforce/Business Development**

### **Medical Marijuana**

We are very concerned about the unintended consequences of the passage of the medical marijuana referendum several years ago. Complete repeal of this referendum should be our first and foremost consideration, and the legislature should realize that the law that was passed was not the intent of the voting public. If complete repeal is not enacted, then we support the right of the employer to make a determination if an employee is fit for work. The rights of both the employer and the employee need to be considered if testing becomes an issue; however the rights of the employer need to be protected. If medical marijuana will continue to be allowed, we feel that there should be a reauthorization of user cards on an annual basis, based on a thorough review of the user's medical records by a qualified physician to determine the continued need. New card applicants also should go through a thorough review of their medical history, have a licensed healthcare provider complete a thorough examination, and show a demonstrated medical need. Licensing, which must include all aspects of the licensing and distribution system, should not be done without an in-depth background check, licenses should be issued annually at a substantial fee, and should be non-transferrable. There also should be some method of determining the quality and strength of the product being sold, and some determination should be made regarding who is allowed to grow medical marijuana. Finally, Montana has passed a clean indoor air act, and legislation should be crafted to amend this law to include healthcare facilities and the healthcare facility's campus that is subject to a smoke-free campus policy.

### **Workforce Training**

Publicly funded worker training is essential in order for Montana to be competitive when it comes to industry retention/expansion and new industry recruitment. We support continued funding to help offset the cost of training individuals for newly created "base industry sector" jobs as enacted by previous legislatures. Furthermore, we support expanding training funds and programs for incumbent worker training to assist existing businesses to expand and to utilize the talents of their incumbent workers to meet the demands of the 21st century workplace. Advancing incumbent workers to more technical and skilled positions within their companies will provide positive results for the worker, the business and Montana's economy. We support the reduction of bureaucratic costs and improved efficiencies in the workforce system resulting in maximizing funding to train workers and assist businesses. One key to success will be continued public/private partnerships — especially with higher education — that strategically advance overall educational attainment for business, industry and the community.

### **Wrongful Discharge**

Montana's Wrongful Discharge Act, being the only statute of its kind in the nation, has had an adverse impact on recruiting new businesses to Montana. We oppose any action or legislation we deem will have an effect of eroding employer's rights under the current statutes. We will support any improvements or modifications to this statute which would enhance Montana's ability to attract and retain new or existing businesses.

### **Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace**

We support clarification and expansion of the 1999 legislation to allow universal drug and alcohol testing of employees with proper procedures established to safeguard the innocent.

### **Workers Compensation**

Workplace safety is the shared responsibility of employers and employees. We support the pursuit and prosecution of worker's compensation fraud whether perpetuated by an employee or an employer. We support a competitive insurance market for workers' compensation, not dominated by a single insurance carrier or the State Fund. We support the exclusive remedy doctrine for workplace injuries with the inherent trade off of legislated benefits for the injured worker without having to prove negligence. We support prompt delivery of reasonable and appropriate benefits to a worker who, in the scope and course of employment, has suffered an injury or illness as a result of a workplace environment. We encourage employer/employee participation in programs that promote safety in the workplace such as SafeMT.

## **Travel and Tourism**

### **Tourism Promotion**

We realize that state tourism promotion funding is inadequate, and we support the state lodging tax and the positive impacts that are made in statewide, regional and local tourism marketing. To be most effective on a local and regional level, we support substantial reform of the rules and regulations administered through the state Tourism Advisory Council. We oppose additional shifting of the bed tax funds for infrastructure, or any reductions in the levels of funding for local and regional marketing organizations such as the Regional Countries and individual Convention and Visitors Bureaus. Any attempt to reallocate any unspent funds, or to increase, decrease or in any way modify the bed tax for any purpose other than the promotion of tourism will be vigorously opposed. Ideally, the 3% general fund portion of the lodging tax should be allocated specifically to state tourism with a portion granted to regions and CVBs.

We oppose any changes, additions or deletions to the current Tourism Business Improvement District laws that are now in place.

### **Incentives**

We support carefully considered incentives to lure conventions, groups and the film industry to the state.

### **MetraPark**

MetraPark is a vital part of the tourism infrastructure and we believe that it is a critical time for master planning of this facility.

- We support a complete assessment of facility and grounds' future use that will drive the most business to the community and the facility.
- We support the facility's operation as a subsidized attraction in driving business to Billings and Yellowstone County.
- We support public investment to improve and maintain the facility and grounds.
- We encourage the County to maintain adequate reserves to pay for such capital repairs and replacements in the future.

### **Potential East End Hospitality Corridor and City Entrance**

We recommend that consideration be given to developing the East End entrance to Billings through way finding signage, beautification and aesthetic landscaping and ease of access, and that the joint planning process for the development of "Trailhead Hospitality Corridor" be continued so that the multiple elements—Swords Park redevelopment, Museum of the Yellowstone, a Metra Park campus Master Plan, a concept plan for the development East-End TIF Hospitality Corridor, a Corridor Study, transportation and trails enhancement—can be planned and developed to create a uniform/themed development of this east-end/Metra park area.

### **Brand Builders**

We support demand generating infrastructure and programs to bring visitors, athletes, companies and conventions to Billings while increasing our quality of life as residents. These infrastructure amenities include natural, historic and cultural amenities.

## **Education**

### **School District 2 Facilities**

In order to support a growing 21<sup>st</sup> Century economy, it is crucial that Billings have a first-rate public school system. Therefore, we support strategic, cost effective investment in the infrastructure that supports public education, including proactive maintenance and revitalization of existing facilities and continuous long-range planning. We encourage this to be a key part of the schools' and cities' planning and zoning process for synergistic community growth.

### **Education Primary/Secondary Funding**

We support quality primary and secondary education delivered efficiently and adequately funded, with provisions for local control. Improvements in the budgeting process, fiscal accountability, and the quality and presentation of discretionary bond issues and mill levies will be welcome improvements. We also support pursuing legislative changes in the structure of basis entitlements for school districts that would change the model to provide the larger school districts with basic entitlement funds based on the number of schools within the district, not just one basic entitlement irrespective of size. The Chamber encourages public-private partnership with the School District.

### **School Attendance Areas**

Boundaries for individual schools have not been addressed for a number of years. We feel that, because of the fluidity of the student population specifically and neighborhoods in general, boundaries should be reviewed frequently and readjusted as needed to alleviate overcrowding and bussing and balance class sizes among individual schools. Emphasis should be placed on neighborhood schools rather than bussing, assuming cost factors are relative equal over the long term.

### **Magnet Schools**

We support the concept of magnet schools which are specific in scope and do not require all of the extra-curricular activities.

### **Financial Advice**

We support the goals of all levels of education for a myriad of reasons, as taxpayers we also ask these services be delivered in a financially efficient manner.

### **MSU Billings Unique Position in Post Secondary Education**

We recommend that the Board of Regents and Legislature create an atmosphere which recognizes the unique role of MSU Billings as an urban university. MSU Billings — with its certificate, two-year, four-year and graduate programs — is embedded in this city and is called upon to be solutions-oriented organization. The university efficiently provides this region highly qualified graduates who are work-ready in business, education, healthcare, industry and public service.

### **Facilities**

We support continuation of a formal long-range capital building plan for the University system. Montana State University-Billings is an integral part of our community and investment in its infrastructure is critical to its continuation. We support the acquisition of additional land where needed to insure orderly long term growth.

## **Agriculture**

### **Water Rights Protection**

We believe that there should be no dilution of water rights and, if anything, these rights should be reaffirmed and strengthened.

### **Regulations regarding Exempt Water Wells**

We believe that individual property rights need to be protected and agricultural use water well development should be exempted from any laws designed to regulate water rights and wells for subdivisions

### **Water Quality and Soil Quality Issues**

We feel that Montana's existing law should be maintained and supports state's rights to make these determinations.

### **Water Marketing**

We oppose any legislation that will dilute our rights.

### **Private land purchases by the state of Montana.**

Protecting the rights of property owners is fundamental to the success of a free market economic system, and is an important cornerstone upon which our nation was founded. A strong local economy depends on preserving the right of responsible individuals to freely own, use and transfer real property. There should be no let loss of private land to state ownership.

### **Riverbed ownership**

With the recent court case stating that the state of Montana owns the riverbed under the PPL dams and owes rental money to the state, the issue becomes broader for private property owners with land adjacent to navigable rivers regarding ownership. This also has the potential to extend to non-navigable rivers. Any attempt to broaden this issue beyond what the courts have already determined should be vigorously opposed.

### **Agriculture Business Development**

We believe that research stations such as the Southern Agriculture Research Center Experimental Station at Huntley provide a valuable service to the Billings area in particular and the state of Montana in general when it comes to agriculture production. We support continued operation of these experimental stations at or greater than the current level of funding. We also support the continuation of the Extension Service Programs at or above current staffing and funding levels. Finally, we support the continuation of Agriculture Education at all levels, from K-12 through college and encourage higher education to expand and develop new programs and classes as new technology is developed.

## **Justice and Corrections**

### **Sentencing**

We support differing levels of correction, including alternate sentencing and work-release for young or first-time offenders and detention for hard-core criminals. We ask the judicial system to follow guidelines for sentencing. We believe in fair, fast, and just sentencing.

### **Funding**

We support funding and evaluating private prisons and pre-release centers, in appropriate locations, as alternatives. We believe in rehabilitation, and the offenders should play a part in paying their own way. Restitution, including the cost of incarceration, garnishment, and seizure of assets should all be options for funding.

This 2011 Billings Community Policy evolved out of a partnership with the following entities and organizations:

