

#18

COMPLETE

Time Spent: Over a week
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Page 1: Introduction

Q1 Please provide your name.

Mary McNally

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Q2 Why are you running for State Legislature?

I am running for re-election in Senate District 24. I live in the district, which encompasses much of downtown Billings. Billings needs strong and forward-looking representation in Helena, and I believe I provide that.

Q3 What do you believe is the most important issue related to growing business in Billings and what are your suggestions for addressing that issue?

Billings is a great place to live and work and play. I believe quality of life is an important factor in attracting talent and growing businesses and we have that, especially with downtown revitalization, the health care community, and our growing trail system. We need to keep focused on workforce development and training, and make sure we take care of our most vulnerable citizens.

Q4 In the 2017 Legislative Session, local option authority was supported by the Billings Chamber, City of Billings, Big Sky Economic Development, Downtown Billings Partnership, and numerous other organizations across the state. Under what conditions would you vote for a local option authority bill?

I supported the local option authority, even though I did not favor the provisions related to property tax adjustments. I did not have the opportunity to actually vote on it as it never made it to the Senate.

Q5 Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts are an important economic development tool for our community. How will you work to ensure one of local government's most useful funding mechanisms is preserved?

I support TIF, and there are two in SD 24 that I believe are good examples of how effective TIFs can be for economic development and renewal. I currently Chair the Legislative Audit Committee, and the recently released performance audit found TIF districts are being appropriately managed by local governments and projects are related to the broad statutory goals. This important finding was somewhat lost amid other recommendations in the report.

Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Q6 In 2016, Yellowstone County hoteliers remitted \$3.5 million in facility use taxes to the state. That year our regional Convention & Visitors Bureau, which markets and promotes our area as a travel destination, received \$350,000 (just 10%) from the state to market and promote tourism in our area. Will you work with the Billings Chamber and lodging partners to ensure more money is returned to the areas generating lodging tax revenue? (Y/N) **Yes**

Q7 MSU Billings is an essential economic driver for our community and surrounding area. Not only does MSU Billings provide educational opportunity for Montanans, it also assists with workforce development, an increasingly important challenge facing our community. How will you help to ensure MSU Billings receives adequate funding for facility updates?

I recently retired after a 29-year teaching career in the College of Business at MSUB. It is a very underappreciated (and under-funded) institution. Ensuring the Health Sciences building is built is critical, and something I have worked hard for in the Legislature. But there needs to be additional pressure to ensure that MSUB gets its fair share from the MUS and particularly from the MSU system. MSUB needs to be allowed to develop programs and delivery systems that meet the workforce development needs of this community.

Q8 The Billings Chamber, City of Billings, Big Sky Economic Development, Downtown Billings Partnership, and other community partners, are working with Hammes Co. on the development of One Big Sky Center, comprised of two development districts and anchored by a regional convention center. If a state funding source were identified and developed, under what conditions would you support the inclusion of state monies in the funding mix for a regional convention center in Billings?

I would support the inclusion of state monies, but only if the One Big Sky Plan is thoroughly vetted, is feasible, and has strong local financial commitment and support. As far as I can tell, that is currently in flux.

Q9 Sixteen percent of Billings workers are employed in the healthcare arena resulting in a total direct and indirect economic output of \$2.6 billion annually. Do you believe that cutting state reimbursement to hospitals, clinics and other healthcare providers is a way to address state budget shortfalls? (Y, N)

No,

You may provide additional context if appropriate.:

I did not support the budget that came out of the general session, and also opposed the budget decisions that resulted from the special session. My opposition was not just about state reimbursements to health care providers; it was also because of the impact of the cuts on our most vulnerable citizens. I know the legislature could have done better.

Q10 Throughout the legislative interim and November 2017 Special Session the re-evaluation of Montana's funding mechanisms was a topic of discussion. What are your thoughts on the need to identify new revenue sources to address a shifting economy and our infrastructure needs?

I served on the tax committee for two sessions in the House, and just this past session was on Senate Finance and Claims. We need to re-evaluate funding sources and our tax system to deal with new economic realities. We also need a more accountable system for setting realistic revenue estimates and making responsible decisions about budget cuts.

Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

Q11 Billings, and the greater Yellowstone County area, has the largest legislative delegation in the state and there is great potential to work together toward regional specific initiatives. How do you plan to work with all members of the Yellowstone County area delegation for the betterment of our business community during the 2019 Legislative Session?

We made some progress on this issue during the last session. Making sure candidates and elected officials are aware of regional priorities is a great start and asking candidates where they stand on these priorities (through questionnaires like this one) is important. Rep. Don Jones and I were on a Chamber panel after the last session where this issue was discussed. I think the key is holding local elected officials accountable for votes that impact Billings, something that I don't believe has been done very effectively until recently. The periodic video conferences during the session are useful for highlighting issues, for example, but no one asks questions about votes taken. I would like to see the Chamber make sure that members are aware of how elected officials vote on key issues.

Page 3: Finalizing Questionnaire

Q12 If you have not sent the Billings Chamber a high-res image you would like us to use, please upload a photo here.

Mary McNally 4x5@300 color.jpg (1.5MB)
