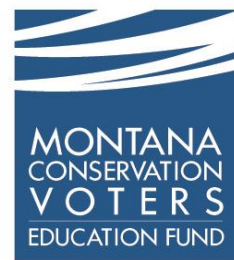


To: 2022 Montana Candidates and Interested Parties  
From: Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund  
Date: May 2022  
RE: Background and Messaging on Conservation in Montana

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Conservation in Montana is a backbone of our way of life, and ensuring continued stewardship of our lands has never been more important. As you know, our state constitution is celebrating its 50th anniversary and one of its most significant elements is our right to a “clean and healthful environment.” Protecting that constitutional right will be at the heart of our work for 2022.

With staff across the state, the mission of the Montana Conservation Voters Education Fund (MCV Education Fund) is to engage all Montanans and their communities by empowering them to protect our clean air, clean water, public lands and voting rights through education, mobilization and the power of grassroots advocacy.

In this memo, you will find information on the landscape of conservation in Montana, what environmental and conservation issues matter to Montanans, ways to best talk about those issues with voters and ideas for incorporating those issues into your campaigns.

We look forward to developing our relationship with you, partnering to make conservation issues a centerpiece of your campaign and ensuring that Montana’s elected leaders are committed champions for conservation. The MCV Education Fund has expertise in policy, politics, field organizing and communications, and we look forward to being a resource to you.

## I. Landscape of Conservation Funding

In the 2020 election, Montana voters supported the legalization of recreational marijuana through a ballot initiative. In voting for the measure, the voters approved that revenue generated from the marijuana sales be allocated for conservation funding in the state. During the 67th legislative session in 2021, the legislature passed HB 701, which directed a portion of revenue from recreational marijuana sales to conservation and outdoor recreation programs like State Parks, Habitat Montana, and the MT Trail Stewardship grant program. It was the result of many months of hard work by conservation champions like you to ensure the will of Montana voters was honored and tax revenue went to conservation measures.

As of April 2022, the state has already collected \$8.7 million in revenue from the 20 percent tax.<sup>1</sup> Per the wording in the passed law, after the first \$6 million goes to substance abuse prevention and treatment, 32 percent of the remaining tax revenue will go to Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (FWP), State Parks, Trails and Recreational Facilities accounts and Non-Game Wildlife accounts. The Governor’s Budget Office estimates \$130 million in recreational marijuana sales this year and \$195.5 million in 2023. Unfortunately, that funding is already at risk by anti-conservation leaders in our state. We should expect and prepare for bills that chip away or remove the conservation funding completely in the upcoming legislative session.

## II. Conservation Issues that Matter to Montanans

Montanans have a deep connection to our state’s land and water; it’s part of our identity and our way of life. In a state that boasts the most beautiful public lands, forests, rivers and wildlife in the world, Montanans know firsthand just how important it is to protect and conserve our outdoor spaces for

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<sup>1</sup> Montana Department of Revenue, “Cannabis Sales Reports,” 6 Apr. 2022, <https://mtrevenue.gov/cannabis-sales-reports/>

future generations.

The pandemic made it clear that access to our state's best outdoor spaces is crucial to our overall well-being. 89 percent of Montanans visited state lands in 2020, such as Montana wildlife management areas, state parks and fishing access sites.<sup>2</sup> Overall, our state lands welcomed nearly 3.4 million visitors in 2021, up more than 17 percent from 2019.<sup>3</sup>

The latest annual State of the Rockies Poll by Colorado College told us what we know all along – Montanans overwhelmingly care about conservation and are concerned about the threat climate change has already begun to bring to our state.

- 87 percent of Montanans say that issues involving clean water, wildlife, and public lands are important in deciding whether to support an elected public official;
- 92 percent are concerned about more frequent and severe wildfires; and
- 74 percent think that wildfires in the West are more of a problem than they were ten years ago.<sup>4</sup>

**87% of Montanans say that issues involving CLEAN WATER, WILDLIFE & PUBLIC LANDS important in deciding whether to support an elected public official.**

2022 Colorado College Survey

Additionally, more than 70 percent of Montanans support a national goal of protecting 30 percent of America's lands and waters by 2030.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to the announcement of Governor Greg Gianforte to remove Montana from the 30x30 initiative.<sup>6</sup>

Montanans understand that protecting our outdoor spaces protects and grows our robust outdoor recreation economy. From a survey by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis for 2020, Montana topped the list for the largest outdoor recreation economy per capita, accounting for 4.3 percent of the state's GDP or \$2.2 billion.<sup>7</sup> But the money extends across all aspects of the state's economy; for every \$1 million spent in conservation activities, between 17 and 31 Montana jobs are supported.<sup>8</sup> Those investments support jobs in a wide range of industries, from retail to hospitality to high tech and countless others. Protecting our outdoor spaces makes dollars and sense for our small businesses.

### III: Talking About Conservation Issues

While Montana voters are deeply connected to their environment and outdoor spaces, it's important to talk about these issues with voters in the right way. In this section, we discuss a compilation of environmental messages that have been tested (including guidance as to what to "say/not say") and directions for discussing specific issues.

Environmental issues and how to discuss them with voters and "the public" have been a long researched topic. Here is a compilation of some of those findings, including concepts, phrases, and words to use or avoid.

<sup>2</sup> University of Montana Crown of the Continent and Greater Yellowstone Initiative, "2020 University of Montana Statewide Survey," March 2020, <https://crown-yellowstone.umt.edu/voter-surveys/2020/2020-survey-results.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, "2021 Montana State Parks Annual Visitation Report," Feb. 2022,

<https://fwp.mt.gov/binaries/content/assets/fwp/stateparks/documents/2021-montana-state-parks-annual-visitation-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Colorado College, "Colorado College's State of the Rockies Project 2022 Conservation in the West Poll Montana," Feb. 2022,

[https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/2022/2022\\_SotR\\_StateFactSheets\\_MT.pdf](https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/2022/2022_SotR_StateFactSheets_MT.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Wulfhorst, Emma, "Gianforte Says Montana Will Not Participate in Biden's '30 by 30' Initiative." KECI, 11 Mar. 2022,

<https://nbcmontana.com/news/local/gianforte-says-montana-will-not-participate-in-bidens-30-by-30-initiative>

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, "Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. and States, 2020," Nov. 2021,

<https://www.bea.gov/news/2021/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2020>

<sup>8</sup> MT Office of Outdoor Recreation, "The Montana Business Landscape," 2020, <https://business.mt.gov/Outdoor-Recreation>

## DO:

1. **Evoke Future Generations**  
This concept “is one that voters volunteer organically as a reason for supporting conservation; moreover, voters who hear it consistently rate it as compelling. The economic downturn has done nothing to diminish the resonance of this time-honored rationale for conserving nature.”<sup>9</sup>
2. **Focus on Public Health and Safety**  
Voters’ hierarchy of needs starts with health and safety, not ecosystems or “the environment.”<sup>10</sup>
3. **Use Specific Examples of Things that Could Harm Us**  
“Case studies remain a powerful part of successful strategies.”<sup>11</sup>  
e.g., “The Trump administration is trying to undermine or eliminate safeguards like the Clean Air and Water Acts that protect our health and, instead, allow power plants to spew unlimited amounts of toxic pollutants like mercury, arsenic, and sulfur dioxide in our air and water.”<sup>12</sup>
4. **Emphasize the Solutions**  
People are far more likely to support action if they think it can make a difference. “Explaining how voters will benefit from a policy beats describing how they will be threatened by its absence every time.”<sup>13</sup>
5. **Use Phrases that Imply Ownership, Inclusion and Shared Responsibility**  
Think “our” & “we” to attach personal meaning
6. **Use Powerful Validators and Show Local Effects**  
e.g., “Last year, ranchers faced one of the worst droughts in years – putting their livelihoods at risk and impacting Montana’s economy.”
7. **Invoke a Moral Imperative**  
Be aspirational and future-oriented while avoiding being harsh or judgmental.
8. **Use a Villain When Needed**  
“Corporate polluters” consistently tests well

## DONT:

1. **Get Trapped in “Economy vs. Environment” Debate**  
Instead, “voters see no reason why we cannot continue to protect land and water while maintaining the country’s economic strength...73 percent of business owners believe we can protect land and water and have a strong economy at the same time, while fewer than one in five believe that those objectives are even ‘sometimes’ in conflict.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Andrew Bauman, Global Strategy Group, “Messaging on Climate, Energy and the Environment in the Era of Trump,” April 2017, <http://www.globalstrategygroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Climate-March-Memo-F04.26.17.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> David Metz, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates and Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies, “The Language of Conservation,” April 15, 2013, <http://www.elkhornsloughctp.org/uploads/files/13824621782013%20Language%20of%20Conservation%20Memo.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Celinda Lake, Lake Research Partners, “Regulatory Enforcement: Winning the Debate,” 2016 <https://stateinnovation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/LRP-Report-Enforcement-Working-Group-Public-Subset-121616.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Bauman 2017

<sup>13</sup> Metz et al. 2013

<sup>14</sup> Public Opinion Strategies, Montana Business Survey, 2013,

2. **Focus on Conserving Nature for Nature’s Sake**  
Rather, “voters are increasingly telling us that the best reasons to engage in conservation are people-centric...a majority now say that benefits to people are the best reason to conserve nature.”<sup>15</sup>
3. **Use the Word “Ban”**  
This is counter to voters’ feelings of having freedom and independence.
4. **Debate Whether Environmental Issues Should Be Our Top Priority**  
Instead, the question should be, how do we fix them?
5. **Use the Word “Federal”**  
The federal government is viewed negatively. Refer to specifics, like national parks or national forests. Specific agencies are also popular, so “referring to ‘lands overseen by the National Park Service or U.S. Forest Service’...is also a positive.”<sup>16</sup>
6. **Don’t Talk About “Regulations,” Use “Enforcement”**  
“The call for tougher, fairer and increased enforcement (with penalties) beats their message of [regulations] killing jobs, increasing costs, and hurting small business”<sup>17</sup>
7. **Talk About Benefits of Nature or “Nature’s Values”**  
“Few voters spend time visiting “ecosystems” – they visit forests, wetlands, rivers, deserts and mountains.”<sup>18</sup>

#### IV. Specific Conservation Issues

The following is an overview of and guidance on how to talk about specific environmental and conservation issues in Montana.

##### Clean Energy in Montana

Montana ranks among the top 10 states with the largest share of electricity generated from renewables, about 45 percent.<sup>19</sup> Montana's renewable portfolio standard (enacted in 2005) requires retail electricity suppliers to acquire at least 15 percent of the electricity they sell in-state from renewable energy sources starting in 2015.<sup>20</sup> Montana has consistently surpassed that goal.<sup>21</sup>

Support for renewable energy is growing in Montana. An August 2021 poll done by our sister organization, Montana Conservation Voters, and Data for Progress found that 57 percent of Montana voters support gradually increasing the use of renewable energy resources to 100 percent in the

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[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/592f175df7e0abbb80a1a4ce/t/59925136f14aa1d24631b734/1502761271761/2013.9.MT\\_bu\\_siness-survey.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/592f175df7e0abbb80a1a4ce/t/59925136f14aa1d24631b734/1502761271761/2013.9.MT_bu_siness-survey.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Metz et al. 2013

<sup>16</sup> David Metz, Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin, Metz & Associates and Lori Weigel, Public Opinion Strategies, “How to Communicate Effectively to Stop Takeovers of Public Lands,” 30 Jul. 2015,

[https://twso.org/public.sharepoint.com/Documents/Messaging%20Recommendations\\_Stopping%20PLT.pdf](https://twso.org/public.sharepoint.com/Documents/Messaging%20Recommendations_Stopping%20PLT.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Lake 2016

<sup>18</sup> Metz et al. 2013

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, “U.S. Energy Information Administration Independent Statistics and Analysis Montana,” Mar. 2022, <https://www.eia.gov/state/?sid=MT#:~:text=In%202021%2C%20Montana%20ranked%2010th,largest%20generating%20plants%20produce%20hydropower>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

state.<sup>22</sup> This is not a new attitude. In a 2016 survey, more than 90 percent of Montana voters said solar, wind and other clean energy sources are a sound investment for our state.<sup>23</sup>

On top of that, Montanans recognize the many job and economic opportunities that come with the state's transition to clean energy. In December 2021, the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) announced more than \$1.1 million for grants in the Fast Charge Your Ride program. The grants are paired with approximately \$450,000 in matching funds that will put 27 new stations across 13 Montana counties. The funding comes from a multibillion-dollar settlement between the U.S. Department of Justice and Volkswagen. In addition to the charging stations, a portion of the Volkswagen funding (\$7.3 million) will be made available for replacing diesel vehicles (e.g. dump trucks and transit buses).

Additionally, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, signed into law late last year, includes \$5 billion for states under the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program (NEVI). Montana will receive nearly \$43 million through NEVI to help fund direct-current fast-charging infrastructure along interstate and U.S. highway corridors over the next five years.

Furthermore, Montana cities are taking their own action. Bozeman, Missoula and Helena all committed to being powered by 100 percent clean, renewable electricity by 2030.

According to pollster Andrew Baumann:

There is a broad and intense cross-partisan desire for a move toward renewable energy. While the issue of climate change is polarizing, government support for renewable energy is not. According to a post-election survey by Public Opinion Strategies, 86% of voters support action (59% strongly) to "accelerate the development and use of clean energy in the U.S.," including 72% of base Republicans.<sup>24</sup>

#### MESSAGE GUIDANCE:

- Never use the term "green jobs," it's too vague and unknown by voters.<sup>25</sup>
- "Clean energy" or "renewable energy" are stronger terms to use than "alternative energy" or "green energy."<sup>26</sup>
- Focus on jobs, innovation and growing our economy  
For example, a report entitled "Montana Wind Jobs" found that Montana ranked 48th out of the 50 states for the number of jobs in wind energy production, despite being fifth in the nation for land-based wind potential.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the median wages in wind energy are 34 percent higher than those in coal mining and are comparable to those in fossil fuel electricity generation.<sup>28</sup>

## Climate Change

The vast majority of Montanans believe climate change is happening, that it's a problem, and that we must take action, some 67 percent.<sup>29</sup> And the numbers of voters regardless of political affiliation, who said they were worried about environmental problems worsened by climate change had jumped

<sup>22</sup> Data for Progress and MCV, "Montana Voters Support the Clean Electricity Standard." Aug. 2021, [https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/mt\\_voters\\_support\\_ces.pdf](https://www.filesforprogress.org/memos/mt_voters_support_ces.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> MT Voters Education Fund, "MCV Education Fund Releases Clean Energy, Public Lands Issue Poll," 2016 <https://mtvotersedfund.org/newsroom/mcv-education-fund-releases-clean-energy-public-lands-issue-poll/>

<sup>24</sup> Bauman 2017

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Ibid

<sup>27</sup> Renewable Northwest, "Montana Wind Jobs," June 2021,

[https://renewablenw.org/sites/default/files/Reports-Fact%20Sheets/MT%20Wind%20Jobs\\_JUN2021%20\(Final\).pdf](https://renewablenw.org/sites/default/files/Reports-Fact%20Sheets/MT%20Wind%20Jobs_JUN2021%20(Final).pdf)

<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> Yale Program on Climate Change Communication, "Montana: Public Opinion on Climate Change, 2021," 2021,

<https://factsheets.yppccc.tools/Montana-TTpoYXBwZW5pbmcsd29ycmlIZCxoZWJfJaEdXLTU6VC0yOIQtmZpULTQ6VC01OIQtmNjpULTc6VC04OIQOTpULTFwOIQtmTE6VC0xMjpULTFzOIQtmTO6VC0xNTpOb25ILTE2Ok5vbmUtMTc6Tm9uZS0xODpOb25ILTE5Ok5vbmUtMjA6Tm9uZS0xMTpOb25ILTIyOk5vbmUtMjM6VC0yNDpULTI1OIQ=>

significantly in the last decade.<sup>30</sup> Despite the shared concerns by many, the issue is still incredibly polarizing, both in Montana and across the country. As pollster Andrew Baumann summarizes:

A recent Gallup poll shows that Americans' belief that climate change is already happening (62%) and is caused by human activity (68%) is at an all-time high. The percentage who worry "a great deal" about the issue is also at a record high, up 8 points in the last year. However, the issue remains deeply polarizing. Concern about climate change has increased significantly among Democrats and independents, but Republicans remain less concerned, resulting in the largest partisan gap among any issue tested by Gallup.<sup>31</sup>

#### MESSAGE GUIDANCE:

- Focus on the actual effects. 92 percent of Montanans are concerned about more frequent wildfires and 82 percent are concerned about snowpack and drought.<sup>32</sup>
- Use "carbon pollution" instead of "climate pollution," as the latter terminology drops support with voters.<sup>33</sup>
- Highlight the health benefits of reduced pollution – with a focus on specific pollutants and diseases.<sup>34</sup>
- Go beyond just jobs to emphasize the impact on American innovation and the economy broadly.<sup>35</sup>

### Public Lands and Water

Montanans are highly aware of and deeply connected to our public lands and waters. With 38 million acres of public lands, 170,000 miles of rivers, 3,200 named lakes, 55 state parks, 15 wilderness areas, eight National Park Service units, ten national forests and one national monument, and our access to the outdoors is unparalleled.



Our state's public lands and waters support \$7.1 billion in consumer spending and more than 71,000 jobs, making outdoor recreation the second-largest sector in our state's economy. And 89 percent of Montanans recognize the importance of public lands to our state's economy.<sup>36</sup> In 2020, the state had 20.6 million visitors to public lands, which created 16,548 jobs.<sup>37</sup>

Despite these facts and attitudes toward our public lands, public land transfer remains a real threat and has continuously been adopted as part of the Montana State Republican Party Platform.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, Governor Gianforte's removal of Montana's participation in the 30x30 initiative is in opposition to what the vast majority of Montanans want. The latest polls have 71 percent of Montanans support the national goal to protect 30 percent of America's lands and waters by 2030.<sup>39</sup> On top of that, 90 percent of Montanans say public lands have a positive impact on clean water, children's education on nature and overall quality of life.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Missoula Current, "Poll: Climate Change, Water Loss, Habitat Top Concerns of Montanans, Western Voters," 21 Feb. 2022, <https://missoulacurrent.com/outdoors/2022/02/habitat-western-voters/>

<sup>31</sup> Bauman 2017

<sup>32</sup> Colorado College 2022

<sup>33</sup> Bauman 2017

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> University of Montana 2020

<sup>37</sup> MT Office of Outdoor Recreation 2020

<sup>38</sup> Montana Republican Party, "Platform of the Montana Republican Party," 2018, <https://mtgop.org/about/party-platform>

<sup>39</sup> Colorado College 2022

<sup>40</sup> University of Montana 2020

## MESSAGE GUIDANCE:

- By wide margins, Montana voters believe that public lands are important to the economy and way of life, so focus on these values.<sup>41</sup>
- They also strongly oppose privatizing or selling off public lands, so paint the opposition in this frame and stand against these efforts.
- **Be specific.** Talk about hiking, biking, camping, fishing, hunting, viewing wildlife and enjoying nature. “The more vivid the language, the more likely voters are to see themselves using these lands and enjoying their benefits.”<sup>42</sup>
- Emphasize the importance of “access” to public lands and waters.
- Stress the need for children to spend more time outdoors. As two pollsters said, of 18 conservation-related problems tested in a recent national survey, ‘kids not spending enough time outdoors and in nature’ rated the most serious problem.<sup>43</sup>

## Oil and Gas

As we transition to clean energy, oil and gas leasing of public lands continues to be a polarizing issue. While the majority of Montanans (73 percent) support stopping or limiting oil and gas development on public lands, it remains at the forefront as gas prices continue to rise.<sup>44</sup> Messaging on this can be difficult.



## MESSAGE GUIDANCE:

- Stress the need for “SOLUTIONS,” not “bans.”  
The industry has spent millions of dollars on a PR campaign regarding how safe and beneficial oil and gas is for Montana and has subsequently softened its image. Focusing on our ability to move towards a clean energy future with safe and healthy communities is key.
- Note that well over a majority (71 percent) of Montana voters support increasing the royalty fee that oil and gas companies pay for drilling on public lands to 25 percent.<sup>45</sup>
- Focus on the fact that we need a level playing field, and the oil and gas industry currently has too many advantages and is working only for itself, not for the people of Montana.
- Focus on “enforcement” against polluters and the lack of resources to adequately do so.
- Cite health and safety issues with oil and gas drilling first.
- Consider focusing on homeowners’ and property rights.

## Democracy and Ballot Access Issues

91 percent of Montanans are concerned about the state of our democracy in our country and 55 percent are concerned as it relates to Montana.<sup>46</sup> And for a good reason. By the end of the 2021 session, the Legislature had successfully eliminated Election Day voter registration (HB 176), restricted access to ballot collection services (HB 530), implemented strict voter identification requirements (SB 169), created barriers to mail ballots for young voters (HB 506) and prohibited civic engagement activities on college campuses (SB 309). Each of these new laws contributes to the disenfranchisement of Montana voters, but rural and Indigenous voters will be particularly hurt by the end of same-day voter registration and restricted access to ballot collection services.

<sup>41</sup> Headwaters Economics, “Montana’s Economy, Public Lands, and Competitive Advantage,” August 2017, <https://headwaterseconomics.org/economic-development/montanas-economy-and-protected-lands>

<sup>42</sup> Metz 2013

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Colorado College 2022

<sup>45</sup> Colorado College, “Conservation in the West,” 2020, [https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/2020/2020-conservation-in-the-west-poll-data/2020%20Western%20States%20-%20Interview%20Schedule\\_COMBINED.pdf](https://www.coloradocollege.edu/other/stateoftherockies/conservationinthewest/2020/2020-conservation-in-the-west-poll-data/2020%20Western%20States%20-%20Interview%20Schedule_COMBINED.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> Frank Church Institute and Morning Consult, “Perceptions of Democracy Survey,” Oct. 2021, <https://d25vtythmtl3o.cloudfront.net/uploads/sites/128/2021/11/Survey-Full-Results.pdf>



Election Day voter registration passed with overwhelming bipartisan support in 2005. In the fifteen years since the service first became available, tens of thousands of Montanans have utilized this vital service. In the 2020 election alone, 8172 voters were able to register and cast a ballot because of Election Day voter registration.<sup>47</sup> Election Day voter registration is especially important for voters in Indian Country. The lack of access to mail delivery and inconsistencies in the availability of election services already present significant barriers to the ballot for Indigenous voters. What's more, significant travel time to county election offices and a lack of access to transportation make Election Day services a critical and fail-safe option for Indigenous and rural voters. Currently, this law is subject to four separate lawsuits.

#### MESSAGE GUIDANCE:

- Emphasize barriers to the ballot are unnecessary, unconstitutional and unacceptable.
- Consistently reiterate that Montana has a long history of safe, secure elections. There is little to no evidence of voter fraud in Montana.
- Remind that our right to vote is enshrined in Montana's Constitution. According to Section 13, "All elections shall be free and open, and no power, civil or military, shall at any time interfere to prevent the free exercise of the right of suffrage."
- Montana voters have consistently refused attempts to limit access to the ballot and strongly support preventing the closure of polling places in rural and urban communities, 74 percent.<sup>48</sup>
- Emphasize strong support for protecting voting rights, 58 percent of Montanans are less likely to vote for a candidate who supports legislation to make it harder for voters to cast their ballot.<sup>49</sup>

### Lead Pipes in Schools

In 2020, a new administrative rule passed by the Montana Department of Health and Human Services requires accredited schools to test for lead in water at least every three years. Per the requirements, schools were to submit water samples to the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) by the end of 2021. As of February 2022, only about half of Montana's 560 accredited schools have submitted samples, and of those, approximately 50 percent of the schools across the state had "dangerous levels" of lead in the schools' water.<sup>50</sup> About 9 percent of fixtures sampled must be shut off due to high levels of lead and another 20 percent must be fixed.<sup>51</sup> Children absorb lead at higher rates than the average adult and exposure may lead to brain, red blood cell, or kidney damage, and result in reduced IQ, hearing impairment, reduced attention span and poor classroom performance.<sup>52</sup> We recommend you use [DEQ's portal](#) to search for schools in your district.

### V: How to Incorporate Environmental Issues into Your Campaign

There are several ways environmental issues could be incorporated into your campaign:

- Release policy platforms on key conservation issues.
- Tie conservation issues directly to economic issues, make the connection undeniable and dependant.
- Add sections on your websites outlining your platforms and plans on clean energy jobs, climate change, public lands and water.

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<sup>47</sup> Sakariassen, Alex, "Montana Late Voter Data," Montana Free Press, 17 June 2021, <https://montanafreepress.org/2021/06/17/montana-same-day-voter-data/>

<sup>48</sup> Katherine Patterson, Public Policy Polling, "Broad Support in Key States for Voting Rights Proposals Considered by Congress." Aug. 2021, [https://fairfight.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PPP\\_Memo\\_for\\_Fair\\_Fight.pdf](https://fairfight.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/PPP_Memo_for_Fair_Fight.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Houghton, Katheryn, "Dangerous Levels of Lead Were Found in the Water of about Half the Schools Tested in Montana," Kaiser Health News, 2 Mar. 2022, <https://khn.org/news/article/montana-schools-dangerous-lead-water-test/>

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> DPHHS School Administrative Rules, "Montana School Health Rules 37.111.801," Jan. 2020, <https://dphhs.mt.gov/schoolhealth/schoolrules/index>



- Think about ways to incorporate conservation issues into your stump speech when knocking doors or hosting a fundraiser.
- Travel your district and visit sites that lend themselves to talking about environmental issues that affect those specific areas.
- Attend events held by the conservation community, and connect with those groups' members.
- Tell stories about environmental issues. These issues have powerful validators (e.g., firefighters on climate change, nurses on public health, blue-collar solar installers, etc). Find ways to incorporate these messengers into your campaign and various messages.