

Questions from the Missoulian, submitted 4/10/2020

Name: Margaret Gorski

District: Senate District 44

Political party: Democrat

Age: 67

Family: A husband and two Labrador Retrievers.

Education: B.S. Forest Resources, University of Washington; M.L.A. Landscape Architecture, Environmental Planning, University of California, Berkeley.

Political experience: I had a long career in the US Forest Service where I was frequently required to consult with Congressional delegations on controversial public lands issues. I also held management positions where I had to respond to changing funding levels and priorities every time an administration changed. Those experiences showed me how legislatures use the budget process to influence priorities of the agencies. Most importantly it helped me understand the need for local, state, and the federal government to coordinate and work together to accomplish common goals and to increase efficiencies. I was the Democrat Candidate for HD 88 in the 2016 and 2018 elections.

Online campaign info: <https://www.facebook.com/margaretgorskiforsd44/>

Ways voters can contact you: margaretgorskiforsd44@gmail.com or 406-552-2072

A caveat: since the total fallout from the coronavirus is evolving rapidly, my response to questions that involve State funding could change once we better understand the duration and impact of this pandemic to our economy.

1. When it comes to providing state-funded financial aid for college students, Montana ranks 49th in the nation. Do you think the state should contribute more toward higher education funding or should it be the responsibility of the student to fund their own college education?

Education is vital for a healthy economy and is the cornerstone of democracy. Providing diverse and affordable educational opportunities should be one of the legislature's highest priorities. Access to financial aid is an equalizer to opportunity and no motivated citizen should be denied an education because it's too expensive. However, I believe that if an individual benefits from tax payer funded

assistance, they need to repay their debt to the state. Solutions could include more access to low interest loans for needy students or a requirement to work off their debt through some form of public service.

2. Do you think the state of Montana should increase state funding for affordable housing? Why or why not?

Long standing Republican efforts to reduce taxes and the size of the federal government have resulted in shifting the pressure to states and local jurisdictions to find workable solutions to the housing problem. We need a comprehensive approach that uses the combined strengths of private industry, non-profits, and State, county and city governments to increase the supply of affordable housing. In preference to directly subsidizing rent or housing costs, we should seek out creative ways to finance projects, such as through housing trust funds, low income housing tax credits and the use of Tax Increment Financing Districts.

3. What, in your view, is the largest issue with management of Montana's public lands? What should be done about it?

Montana's public lands are our state's greatest asset. As more and more people move here, it will become harder to balance the protection of the intangible values that many people treasure with using public land resources for economic benefit. Managing public lands for future generations, in the face of climate change and more homes in the wildland urban interface will be particularly challenging. The State legislature should pass laws that better assists counties in working with their Federal agency partners on cross boundary and interagency forest management planning to minimize user conflicts and reduce the risk of wildland fires.

Conclusion: Candidate's answers to these questions will predictably represent party ideology or use meaningless sound bites. Republicans will say something like follow the "Constitution" while reducing taxes and the size of the government. Democrats will say the government exists to help those in need by leveling the playing field and to mitigate the inequalities of capitalism.

I am a pragmatist and a planner who believes we should listen and take good ideas from all sides and come up with solutions that benefit the most people. If elected I will strive to better unite us, not further divide us. It's time to bring the country back together.