



RAISING THE STAKES:
THE INCREASE IN CANDIDATE SELF-FINANCING
IN MONTANA

By
LINDA CASEY

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Montana legislative candidates have become some of the biggest contributors to their own campaigns in the past decade, consistently ranking among the 10 top contributors to legislative races for the past three election cycles.

But in the early 1990s, candidates who financed all or part of their own campaigns were nearly absent from the list of top 10 contributors.

Why the dramatic change in the top contributors to Montana legislative candidates?

The shift may stem in part from a change in the political demographics, with more candidates running for more open seats created by the term limits that began to affect state races in 2000. It also may reflect a change in the recruiting strategies used by the Democratic and Republican parties, because of both term limits and campaign-finance reform.

Since 1996, Montana legislative candidates have operated under the most stringent contribution limits in the nation — a mere \$100 per election.

These limits were passed in November 1994, when Initiative 118 was put before Montana's voters and adopted by a 61 percent majority.

The reform reduced Montana's already low contribution limits, from \$250 per election cycle for House candidates and \$400 for Senate candidates to \$100 per election for both House and Senate candidates. So legislative candidates can accept a maximum of \$200 from a single contributor in an election cycle — and only if they have a viable primary election opponent. Otherwise, they are restricted to \$100 per contributor for the entire election cycle.

Candidates, however, are free to give their own campaigns as much money as they want.

Therefore, with no limits on the use of personal money, wealthy candidates may have the advantage. Candidates who use their own money can avoid the time-consuming, painstaking chore of raising hundreds of small \$100 contributions by simply bankrolling their own campaigns.

CANDIDATE SELF-FINANCE

Candidates' contributions to their own campaigns grew from 11 percent of total contributions in 1990 to 19 percent in 2002. Total contributions to Montana legislative candidates did not change significantly, increasing from nearly \$1.2 million in 1990 to \$1.5 million in 2002. But the number of candidates financing their own campaigns and the amount of money they were willing to spend increased markedly.

Until 1996, the usual top contributors to legislative campaigns were national and state party committees, labor PACs, trade associations, utility companies, and finance, insurance and real estate interests. But beginning in 1996, candidates themselves began appearing on the lists of top contributors. And by 2002, self-financing candidates dominated that list.

The Increase in Self-Financing

By 2002, Montana legislative candidates not only had become the biggest contributors to their own campaigns, but the numbers of candidates financing all or part of their run for office increased, as well. The average amount candidates gave themselves also increased dramatically between 1990 and 2002, nearly doubling from \$766 in 1990 to \$1,483 in 2002.

The following chart shows the number of legislative candidates who contributed to their own campaigns in each election cycle since 1990, as well as the total and average amounts they gave.

YEAR	TOTAL CANDIDATES	SELF-FINANCED CANDIDATES	TOTAL SELF-FINANCE	AVERAGE SELF-FINANCE
1990	268	171	\$130,926	\$766
1992	264	176	\$117,297	\$666
1994	301	228	\$217,712	\$955
1996	265	183	\$158,685	\$867
1998	253	190	\$175,590	\$924
2000	313	239	\$321,594	\$1,346
2002	282	199	\$287,740	\$1,446

Breakdown by Party

Of the self-financing candidates, Republicans are more likely to contribute to their own campaigns than are Democrats. In every election cycle except 1990, more Republicans reached into their own pockets than did Democrats.

In fact, between 1990 and 2002, Republican candidate self-financing dollars increased more than 200 percent, while the total amount Democrats gave to their campaigns increased by only 19 percent.

The average amount Republicans give to their own campaigns also has been higher than the average Democrats give to their campaigns in every election cycle, except 1992 — before term limits were in effect — and 1998, when there was only a \$7 dollar difference between the averages.

The table below shows the number of Democratic and Republican candidates who contributed to their own campaigns in each election cycle, as well as the total and average amounts of self-finance dollars by party.

YEAR	#	DEMOCRATS		#	REPUBLICANS	
		TOTAL	AVERAGE		TOTAL	AVERAGE
1990	93	\$62,128	\$668	76	\$68,604	\$903
1992	87	\$63,323	\$728	88	\$52,448	\$596
1994	111	\$90,328	\$814	116	\$127,334	\$1,098
1996	77	\$49,202	\$639	99	\$105,225	\$1,063
1998	81	\$75,588	\$933	101	\$94,416	\$926
2000	101	\$112,423	\$1,113	122	\$201,789	\$1,654
2002	78	\$74,204	\$951	111	\$211,011	\$1,901

Self-Finance Candidates Come up Winners

Data covering the seven election cycles also revealed that candidates who spent their own money won more often than those who didn't.

Where just under half of the successful candidates in 1990 used their own money, by 2002, nearly 70 percent of the winners financed all or part of their own campaigns. The chart below details this trend.

YEAR	WINNERS WHO CONTRIBUTED	TOTAL WINNERS	% WHO SELF-FINANCED
1990	60	125	48%
1992	70	126	56%
1994	89	128	70%
1996	77	125	62%
1998	92	126	73%
2000	90	126	71%
2002	83	125	66%

CANDIDATES HIT THE TOP 10

In every election cycle beginning with the 1996 election, a candidate who financed either all or part of his or her own campaign has occupied the number-one spot on the top-10 contributor lists.

In comparison, only one candidate even showed up in the top-10 contributor lists in 1990 and 1992 (at number nine and number six, respectively). Interestingly, neither of these candidates were successful. Then two candidates appeared on the list in 1994, in the number eight and number 10 spots, with one winning his race.

By the 2000 election, four of the five largest contributors were candidates giving to their own campaigns. And in the 2002 election, self-financing candidates held the top four spots.

The following table illustrates the change in finance patterns.

YEAR	CONTRIBUTOR	AMOUNT
1990	Montana State AFL-CIO	\$18,215
	Montana Education Association/MEA	\$14,250
	Montana Life Underwriters PAC	\$12,200
	United Transportation Union/UTU TPEL	\$11,275
	Montana Contractors Association/COMPAC	\$11,000
	Citizens for Responsible Government/MT Power PAC	\$10,290
	Montana Trial Lawyers Association/LAWPAC	\$9,750
	Montana State Republican Central Committee	\$9,550
	Gary D. Rebal (Senate District 17)	\$9,167
	Montana Public Employees Association/MPEA	\$8,685

YEAR	CONTRIBUTOR	AMOUNT
1992	Montana Education Association/MEA	\$14,300
	Montana Agricultural PAC	\$11,700
	Montana Contractors Association/COMPAC	\$10,900
	Montana Public Employees Association/MPEA	\$10,445
	Montana Auto Dealers Association/MON CAR PAC	\$10,375
	Katharin A. Kelker (Senate District 44)	\$9,586
	Citizens for Responsible Government/MT Power PAC	\$9,400
	Montana Chiropractic Association/BACK PAC	\$8,875
	Montana State Democratic Central Committee	\$8,571
	Montana Trial Lawyers Association/LAWPAC	\$8,450
1994	Montana Agricultural PAC	\$19,250
	International Brotherhood of Teamsters	\$18,725
	Montana Education Association/MEA	\$17,400
	Montana Realtors Association PAC	\$14,350
	Republican National Committee	\$14,100
	Montana Contractors Association/COMPAC	\$13,700
	Citizens for Responsible Government/MT Power PAC	\$13,065
	Arnie A. Mohl (Senate District 39)	\$12,899
	Montana Auto Dealers Association/MON CAR PAC	\$12,135
	Ted Solomon (Senate District 46)	\$11,626
1996	Mike Taylor (Senate District 37)	\$10,900
	Robert DePratu (Senate District 40)	\$10,882
	Montana State Democratic Central Committee	\$8,401
	Citizens for Responsible Government/MT Power PAC	\$7,875
	Yellowstone County Republican Central Committee	\$7,325
	William E. Glaser (Senate District 8)	\$7,200
	Montana Public Employees Association/MPEA	\$6,982
	Montana Trial Lawyers Association/LAWPAC	\$6,950
	Montana Education Association/MEA	\$6,350
	Montana Auto Dealers Association/MON CAR PAC	\$6,075
1998	Robert Spoklie (House District 79)	\$8,633
	Montana Education Association/MEA	\$8,335
	Arla Jeanne Murray (House District 4)	\$7,100
	Monica J. Lindeen (House District 7)	\$6,989
	Montana Realtors PAC/Montana R PAC	\$6,900
	Montana Auto Dealers Association/MON CAR PAC	\$6,500
	Dennis and Phyllis Washington (Washington Corp.)	\$6,475
	Bill Smith (Senate District 28)	\$6,407
	Montana Wood Products Association/WOOD PAC	\$6,150
	Montana State AFL-CIO	\$5,800

YEAR	CONTRIBUTOR	AMOUNT
2000¹	Montana Education Association-Montana Federation of Teachers/MEA-MFT	\$18,200
	Sam Kitzenberg (Senate District 48)	\$14,900
	Dave Gallik (House District 52)	\$13,367
	Christopher Harris (House District 30)	\$12,566
	Edward B. "Ed" Butcher (Senate District 47)	\$10,900
	Democratic State Central Committee	\$9,240
	Montana State AFL-CIO	\$9,000
	John Cobb (Senate District 25)	\$8,531
	David Havens (House District 1)	\$7,902
	William E. Glaser (Senate District 8)	\$7,474
2002	Mary Jo Fox (Senate District 26)	\$52,754
	Gary L. Perry (Senate District 16)	\$25,515
	Harriet "Hattie" Gibson (Senate District 30)	\$13,200
	Sherm Anderson (Senate District 28)	\$12,100
	Glacier PAC (U.S. Sen. Max Baucus)	\$10,300
	Montana Republican State Central Committee	\$10,125
	Republican Legislative Campaign Committee	\$8,917
	Friends of the Big Sky (U.S. Sen. Conrad Burns)	\$8,740
	Ken Nordtvedt (Senate District 16)	\$7,253
	Montana Education Association-Montana Federation of Teachers/MEA-MFT	\$7,000

Moving into the Lead: 1996 & 1998

In 1996 (the first year of reform), three candidates were among the top 10 contributors, and all three won their races. Those three successful Republican Senate candidates also raised more money than all their opponents combined. Their contributions also far exceeded the average of \$4,990 that winning candidates raised. Two of these candidates, Robert DePratu and Mike Taylor, contributed enough to make them the top two contributors for the 1996 election cycle.

- Robert DePratu put \$10,882 of his own money toward his successful bid for the open Senate seat in District 40 and raised more than all of his opponents combined. His total was \$26,617, while his opponents only raised a total of \$9,389. So even without his own money, DePratu outraised his opponents.
- Mike Taylor, running for the open Senate District 37 seat, also outraised all of his opponents combined. He put \$10,900 into his campaign out of the total \$14,169 he raised. He ran in the primary against two other Republicans who raised only \$5,127 and \$2,963. In the general election, his Democratic challenger raised only \$1,585.

¹ In May 2006, the Institute revised the list of top contributors for 2000, removing Rep. Roy Brown from the list after learning that the campaign-finance information provided by the Montana Commissioner of Political Practices office contained an error in the amount of money Rep. Brown gave to his campaign.

- A third successful Senate candidate, Republican William E. Glaser, was number six on the list of top 10 contributors, raising \$12,655. He, too, outraised all his opponents combined, while adding \$7,200 of his own money to win Senate District 8.

By 1998, four of the top 10 contributors were candidates contributing to their own campaigns. In fact, once again a candidate topped the list of all contributors, while the other three were in the third, fourth and eighth spots. However, in 1998, only one of these candidates (Monica Lindeen) was successful. Again, these candidates gave themselves far more than the average amount of \$5,450 raised by all winning candidates.

- Republican Robert Spoklie led all contributors in 1998, in the race for the open seat in House District 79 that featured a field of four Republicans and one Democrat. Spoklie outraised all other candidates but lost the primary despite total contributions of \$10,748, including \$8,633 of his own money. The winner, Verdell L. Jackson raised \$8,314, including \$4,078 of his own money.
- In the number three spot was Arla Jeanne Murray, a Republican running for an open seat in House District 4. She raised \$16,278, included \$7,100 of her own money. Murray lost despite raising more than twice as much as the winning Democrat. In fact, her personal contribution nearly equaled the amount the winner, Gary Matthews, raised overall. Matthews' total was \$7,809.
- In her second attempt at the seat, Democrat Monica Lindeen raised \$13,885, (\$6,989 of her own money), and unseated incumbent Republican Don Holland in House District 7. Holland raised \$6,517. Lindeen ranked fourth among the top 10 contributors in 1998.
- While Bill Smith lost the general election contest for the Senate District 28 seat, he gave his own campaign \$6,407, to rank eighth on the list.

Dominating the Top Spots: 2000 & 2002

The increase in the number of candidates who financed all or part of their own campaigns continued into the last two elections. In 2000, the top-10 list included seven self-funding candidates, with four among the top five spots. And in 2002, candidates occupied the first four spots, while five made it into the top-10 list.

In 2000, when winning legislative candidates raised an average of \$6,760, five Republicans and two Democrats contributed record-setting amounts to their own campaigns. Interestingly, six of the candidates were running for open seats.

- Republican Sam Kitzenberg ranked second on the list of top 10 contributors, giving \$14,000 to his own campaign to win the open Senate District 48 seat. Kitzenberg was an incumbent House member who had not contributed to his three previous House campaigns.
- Dave Gallik won the open seat in House District 52 and ranked third on the list of top 10 contributors, giving \$13,332 to his own campaign.

The Democrat raised \$21,341 in total contributions — an amount higher than all his opponents combined.

- In the fourth spot, Democrat Christopher K. Harris won the open seat in House District 30 using \$12,566 of his own money. Harris' Republican opponent put \$1,100 into his own campaign. Even so, Harris outraised him by a ratio of nearly 3:1.
- Edward B. Butcher was the fifth-largest contributor in 2000. Butcher, a Republican who won the open Senate seat in District 47, invested \$10,800 of his own money in his campaign.
- Republican John Cobb won Senate District 25 raising \$10,640; the bulk of that — \$8,531 — was his own money. Cobb was the number eight contributor in the 2000 legislative elections..
- David Havens came in as the ninth-largest contributor in 2000 by giving \$7,902 to his own campaign. Havens lost a five-way Republican primary in House District 1 despite funding 100 percent of his own campaign and raising more than all his primary opponents combined.
- Republican William Glaser ranked 10th, giving almost \$7,500 of his own money to his effort to retain the Senate District 8 seat. Glaser defeated the Democratic candidate challenging him, Teresa Stroebe; she raised about \$9,300, giving about \$3,400 of that amount herself.

The five candidates appearing in the top-10 list for 2002 were all Republicans, and four of the five were the top contributors. In an election cycle when the winning legislative candidates raised an average of \$6,733 apiece, these top self-financing candidates contributed more than \$10,000 each to their own campaigns. While only two of these candidates were elected, there were record-making amounts of personal money contributed.

- Mary Jo Fox was by far the largest contributor in 2002. A Republican who lost the race for the open Senate District 26, Fox gave her campaign \$52,653 of the \$60,875 total she raised. Fox raised 70 percent more than her opponent.
- Gary L. Perry took the number two spot on the list, putting \$25,515 toward his open-seat win in Senate District 16. Including his own money, Republican Perry raised \$29,817, or more than 10 times the amount raised by the Democratic candidate he faced in the general election.
- Harriet Gibson claimed the third spot, putting \$13,200 of her own money into her unsuccessful bid for the open Senate District 30 seat. She outspent the other two Republicans in the race.
- Sherman Anderson, a Republican, won the open Senate seat in District 28 after outraising both of his opponents combined. As the number four contributor in 2002, he gave \$12,000 of his overall total of \$29,033 and

in fact, used more of his own money than his Democratic opponent raised overall.

- Ken Nordtvedt, who ran against Perry in the SD 16 Republican primary, raised \$10,800, which included \$7,253 of his own money, ranking him at number nine.