



MTGOP's Quiet Complicity in the Political Swamp



WRITTEN BY
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As I watch what is unfolding this legislative session, I see the failure of the MTGOP to properly vet and support "true" republican candidates for office. As Montana's National Committeeman, I have attended many Republican National Committee (RNC) meetings where the very issues playing out in Montana right now, were being discussed.

What does a party do about wayward politicians who use the term "republican" to describe themselves, but in reality, their voting records and actions portray no resemblance to the principles and platform that comprise the essence of what it means to be a republican?

At the National RNC level I have proposed the idea of an agreement between the state GOP and the candidate wishing to run as a republican. The agreement would allow the candidate to use the "republican" brand/trademark just as a franchisee does in order to use the retail name of the company they agree to represent.

The agreement could be in the form of an oath or pledge, and would act like a franchisee agreement. It would stipulate that both sides agree to uphold certain principles and complete certain actions in exchange for the privilege of working together and allowing the franchisee, or in this case "candidate," to use the republican moniker. Should the candidate fail to keep up their end of the agreement, the Republican Party would strip the candidate of the republican moniker, and the candidate would have no recourse to sue, because it was the candidate who failed to abide by the agreement that was required in order to run as a republican.

The fiasco in the Montana Legislature this session, was a leadership failure not only within the MTGOP, but also the failure of Gov. Gianforte, who intentionally worked behind the backs of our incumbent Freedom Caucus members and ran primary challengers against them-some won, some lost. This included support of most if not all of the "Out of Line Nine" senators who have colluded with the democrats this session to thwart the Conservative Republican agenda.

These well-funded, primary challengers appeared to be selected based on their willingness to do the governor's bidding and:

1. Vote for increased government spending and increased dependency on federal funding at the detriment of state sovereignty and Montanas freedom from federal interference in state's affairs.
2. Promote bigger government-more programs, government employees, etc. (Gianforte has grown the Montana budget more than any other Gov. in the history of Montana).
3. Offering tax breaks on a surplus... that should have never been collected.
4. Refuse to regulate marijuana for the health and safety of Montanans.
5. Vote for anti-U.S. Constitution legislation.
6. Adamantly oppose holding judges accountable for their unconstitutional actions.
7. Support non-partisan races.
8. Support legislation that supports abortion and vote against pro-life legislation.
9. Blindly promote renewable energy, regardless of the negative monetary and environmental impacts on our ranching and farming communities.

Many true conservative Montanans don't recognize the state of the Montana Republican Party. Montana is meant to be a sovereign state but elected officials and members within our party continually work against this constitutional principle. By accepting and becoming dependent on federal funds, we



have enslaved our state and relinquished our freedoms. This is reflected in Gov. Gianforte's massive growth of the state's budget. This is an economically dangerous endeavor, especially in a time when DOGE is auditing federal expenditures and either withholding funds allocated or requiring states to refund misspent funds; as is the case across many other states.

The MTGOP Platform calls for closed primaries. Primaries are meant for each party to choose from among its membership, the best candidate for the November general election. It is not a general election for all parties to be able to decide which candidate gets to run in November. Open primaries also allow democrats to run as republicans and allow democrats to vote for republican primary candidates. Our elected Republican leaders in state office and the MTGOP do nothing to stop it despite it being in our party platform. All the folks that could close the primaries choose not to. Why?

Every honest conservative Republican should vehemently oppose open primaries. The fact that the MTGOP allows so-called republican politicians to vote against closing the republican primary or worse yet, allows so-called republicans to sponsor legislation opposing partisan races, is what infuriates republican voters in Montana and across the country. Having politicians and judges run under a party banner holds them accountable to that party's leadership. Closed primary elections means accountability!

That is part of what is failing us in politics and life, NO ACCOUNTABILITY!

Republican voters, especially Trump supporters, are already suspicious of the institutional Republican Party. The MTGOP is only making things worse when they ignore the elephant in the room (democrats who have infiltrated the Republican Party and run as republicans.....all the while the MTGOP sues groups that complement the Republican cause, such as the Montana Association of Republican Central Committees (MARCCO)). Rather than sue these groups, the GOP should be giving them direction and support. Channeling their resources and energy rather than silencing them makes for a better outcome.

We've reached a point where the Republican Party's leadership won't stand up against the antics of politicians within the party, but instead is willing to alienate hard working grassroots conservatives who are growing the effectiveness of the party.

True conservative republicans are tired of candidates, who call themselves conservatives, and then vote to grow the size of government both in the number of state and local employees and by voting for new and bigger government programs that dramatically increase the Montana budget (Dem. Gov. Bullock handed over a \$12.8 billion budget to Rep. Gov. Gianforte in 2021. Under a Republican Supermajority the budget ballooned to 14 Billion in 2023/24..... 18+ Billion budgeted for 2025/26). When does the spending stop?

That's one of the reasons why I ran for Governor in 2024-to stop the insanely expensive growth of our state government that is financed on the backs of our hard-working families, farmers, ranchers and every day Montanans.

As republicans we can have differing opinions on how to solve problems, but we must agree on what the root of the problem is we are trying to solve. We need to focus on our principles and be guided by trust, fairness and honesty, all of which originate from the foundations of our platform.

There is no bridge that can be built with candidates that oppose the fundamentals of our U.S. Constitution or our platform, for that is the heart of what it means to be a republican. To those members who run as republicans, but will not vote in favor of constitutional bills or bills that support our platform: I ask you to be honest with yourselves, and your constituents, and run in a party that has a platform more suited to your voting record.

I am running for Chair because the MTGOP has paid lip service to the party rules and our platform. Some republicans say that by abiding by our principles, platform and pursuit of excellence, I will destroy our party. I contend our platform is our word to our voters, and if we cannot keep our word we do not deserve to exist as a party. Our party is being destroyed by individuals who choose to serve power and greed over godliness and are willing to lie to voters, and perhaps even themselves, about who they are, and what they stand for and against.

Character, integrity and justice matter, and are more valuable than gold. Members of our party shouldn't be serving as elected officials for their own benefit. As chairman I will pledge myself to the Republican Party and platform and NOT to any single individual or individuals. I am asking our members to have faith in me, in my character and my resolve to strengthen our party. I am willing to endure the fire and ire of republicans who do not seek the best for our party, our state, our country and our God.

The MTGOP needs strong leadership with a direction and vision that puts us on the path to success. As a party, we need to restore integrity and trust along with respect for each other. The party needs to focus on truth and transparency not only in our party and in our elections, but at every level of elected office.

I care about the future of our country and especially our state. As the Chair of the MTGOP, I will combine these principles with discipline and a strong work ethic which I will require at every level to demonstrate that Montana is dedicated to Making America and the State of Montana Great Again.

That starts with investing in each of you and our central committees. Under my leadership, the MTGOP will invest in the success of our county committees and our elected officials. This means education on fundraising, bringing awareness to our principles and executing on community events that show the MTGOP cares about people and principles.

Within one year we will be celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America and I cannot think of a better way to celebrate than a return to the Godly heritage of our country's founding; along with a strong showing of how our party is supportive of our communities. We should revive patriotism, summon the American spirit of strength, determination, and love of country. This historic milestone should have us honoring the contributions and sacrifices of our forefathers, while looking ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond.

Let's work together to make the MTGOP a party you can be proud to belong to because it stands and supports the same principles and values you do. I warmly welcome all freedom loving Americans to help us celebrate the 250th Anniversary of our country and join our movement to make Montana great for republicans again!

With liberty and justice for all,

Tanner Smith
Candidate for MTGOP Chair