

# Top Legislative Scorecards for True Conservative Lawmakers

WRITTEN BY  
Staff Writer

When you want to cut through campaign spin and see which legislators truly vote conservative, these eight scorecards give you transparent, vote-by-vote insights—both on national issues and right here in Montana.

## 1. Heritage Action Scorecard

Tracks both roll-call votes and co-sponsorships on issues from spending cuts to Second Amendment rights. Updated weekly during sessions, it shows how often your members side with Heritage’s conservative policy priorities.

### Strengths

- Includes co-sponsorships as well as key votes
- Covers big-picture and nitty-gritty policy fights
- Easy district or member lookup

### Limitations

- Focuses on Heritage’s prioritized “key votes,” so local-only measures may be omitted

## 2. CPAC/ACU Ratings

Awards points for “conservative outcomes”—either passing a conservative bill or defeating a liberal one—for every U.S. senator, representative, and about 15,000 state legislators.

### Strengths

- Broad coverage of Congress and statehouses
- Long track record and high name recognition

### Limitations

- Scores just 25–30 high-profile roll calls per session
- No credit for amendments, committee work, or co-sponsorship

## 3. Club for Growth “Hardball” Scorecard

Zeroes in on economic freedom, tax policy, and spending restraint. Lawmakers earn (or lose) points based on votes affecting tax rates, entitlement programs, and budget caps.

### Strengths

- Laser-focused on fiscal conservatism
- Transparent methodology for every vote scored

### Limitations

- Doesn’t cover social or national-security issues

## 4. Americans for Prosperity Scorecard

Grades members on votes related to free markets, limited government, and deregulation, plus select local amendments that affect businesses and individuals.

### Strengths

- Emphasizes small-government wins
- Often includes state-level measures

### Limitations

- Fewer total votes scored than Heritage Action

## 5. FreedomWorks Scorecard

Combines key roll-call votes with activism metrics (e.g., grassroots outreach, town halls) to rate how aggressively legislators push limited-government policies.

### Strengths

- Values constituent engagement alongside voting records
- Highlights officials who build coalitions for reform

### Limitations

- Methodology varies year to year, making long-term comparisons tricky

## 6. Conservative Review & Senate Conservatives Fund

Provides letter grades (A–F) based on votes tied to originalist constitutional principles, free markets, and national defense—often used by primary-voter activists as a purity gauge.

### Strengths

- Easy A–F scale
- Emphasizes ideological consistency

### Limitations

- Weighting of individual votes is less transparent

## 7. John Birch Society Freedom Index

A Congressional scorecard grounded strictly in fidelity to the U.S. Constitution, plus state-level legislative scorecards in all 50 states—Montana included.

### Strengths

- Constitution-first approach; decades of continuity
- State-specific scorecards let you compare your MT legislators on constitutional votes

### Limitations

- Focuses solely on constitutional implications, not broader policy arguments

State-level vote selections may be fewer in early years

## 8. Montana Legislative Loyalty Scorecard (Legistats Loyalty Index)

Rates only Montana legislators on how often they vote with the majority of their own party caucus. You get a “loyalty index” percentage and letter grade for the House and Senate.

### Strengths

- Exclusive to Montana’s Legislature, so it’s hyper-local
- Highlights who’s truly aligned (or at odds) with their party’s leadership

### Limitations

- Measures party loyalty, not conservative principle. A high score could simply reflect following leadership, not original-ist or limited-government votes

## How to Use These Scorecards Together

- Cross-Reference National and State: A high Heritage, Club for Growth, and Freedom Index score for your U.S. reps/senators paired with strong Legistats loyalty in Helena shows consistency from DC to MT.
- Drill into Individual Roll Calls: Don’t just look at the aggregate number—click through to see exactly which bills, amendments, or constitutional resolutions earned (or lost) points.
- Spot Rising Stars and Outliers: Year-over-year trends reveal newcomers climbing the ranks or veterans drifting. In Montana, compare AFP’s statewide scorecard to Legistats loyalty to find true conservative leaders who also stand up to party bosses.
- Mobilize Your Network: Use these tools in town halls, op-eds, and grassroots campaigns. When constituents understand the specifics—vote by vote—they become powerful advocates for or against their lawmakers.

By blending national indices with Montana-specific scorecards, you’ll have an airtight view of who really champions conservative values—on every vote, in every chamber.

## Combined 2025 Montana Legislative Scorecards

Below is a consolidated look at five distinct

scorecards—each with its own methodology—showing which bills (where published) each scorecard scores and the scores or ratings for the requested Montana legislators.

### 1. The Freedom Index (John Birch Society)

A targeted set of six “constitutional-implication” roll-calls from the 2025 session.

#### Bills Scored:

- HB 809 – Ban Red Flag Laws
- HB 350 – Prohibit enforcement of WHO/UN/WEF mandates
- HB 504 – Expand livestock-loss assistance to bison
- SJ 4 – Article V Balanced-Budget Amendment Con Con application
- HB 15 – K-12 funding formula inflation adjustment
- SB 44 – Codify separation-of-powers doctrine

Senator Scores (% “pro-liberty” votes out of 6):

| Senator            | District | Score |
|--------------------|----------|-------|
| Kenneth Bogner     | SD-019   | 67%   |
| John Esp           | SD-030   | 67%   |
| Wylie Galt         | SD-039   | 83%   |
| Bruce Gillespie    | SD-009   | 33%   |
| Greg Hertz         | SD-006   | 40%   |
| Greg Hunter        | SD-015   | 33%   |
| Josh Kassmier      | SD-013   | 33%   |
| Gayle Lammers      | SD-021   | 33%   |
| Denley Loge        | SD-045   | 50%   |
| Forrest Mandeville | SD-029   | 83%   |
| Tom McGillvray     | SD-023   | 83%   |
| Wendy McKamey      | SD-012   | 17%   |
| Mark Noland        | SD-005   | 67%   |
| Russ Tempel        | SD-014   | 33%   |
| Tony Tezak         | SD-035   | 83%   |
| Jeremy Trebas      | SD-010   | 67%   |
| Shelley Vance      | SD-034   | 50%   |
| Sue Vinton         | SD-020   | 60%   |
| Michael Yakawich   | SD-024   | 50%   |

### 2. Club for Growth Foundation Economic Scorecard

Covers every vote in 2025 deemed “economic-liberty” related. No discrete bill list. Scores are lifetime % as of 2025.

| Representative      | District | Score (%) |
|---------------------|----------|-----------|
| Brad Barker         | HD-058   | 60        |
| George Nikolakakos  | HD-026   | 60        |
| Melissa Nikolakakos | –        | –         |
| David Bedey         | HD-086   | 60        |
| Lyn Bennett         | –        | –         |
| Brian Close         | –        | –         |
| Marta Bertoglio     | HD-075   | 60        |
| Larry Brewster      | HD-044   | 72        |
| Curtis Cochran      | –        | –         |
| Julie Dooling       | HD-070   | 66        |
| Sherry Essmann      | HD-052   | 83        |
| Jodie Etchart       | HD-048   | 78        |
| Paul Fielder        | HD-013   | 92        |
| John Fitzpatrick    | HD-077   | 60        |
| Steve Fitzpatrick   | –        | –         |
| Randyn Gregg        | –        | –         |
| Llew Jones          | HD-018   | 60        |
| Steven Kelly        | –        | –         |
| Russ Miner          | HD-019   | 60        |
| Greg Oblander       | HD-040   | 54        |
| Linda Reksten       | HD-012   | 66        |
| Curtis Schomer      | –        | –         |
| Tracy Sharp         | –        | –         |
| Courtney Sprunger   | HD-007   | 52        |
| Morgan Thiel        | –        | –         |
| Mike Vinton         | –        | –         |
| Ken Walsh           | HD-071   | 58        |

### 3. CPAC Foundation (CLA) Montana Scorecard

CPAC’s state portal publishes each lawmaker’s “Conservative Voting Index” based on a rotating set of key votes. The 2025 page does not itemize which state bills are scored, nor does it break out individual legislator scores in a static list; you must download their interactive report to view each rep/senator’s rating.

For the legislators you asked about, you can find their individual “2025 MT Rating” by clicking: <https://www.cpac.org/foundation/ratings/mt>

*No static table available without interactive report access.*

### 4. Americans for Prosperity – Montana

AFP-MT also maintains a “Freedom Scorecard” drawn from selected deregulation and taxpayer-protection votes. Their 2025 report is embedded in the same CPAC portal (no separate bill list), and you must log in or

download a PDF to see individual scores.

*No publicly itemized bill list or standalone legislator scores accessible without AFP membership credentials.*

5. LegisStats 2025 Voting Loyalty Scorecard

Tracks every procedural and final vote, ranking members by “Loyal Republican” (caucus loyalty) and “Republican Democrats can count on” (crossover).

House: “Republicans Democrats Can Count On”

| Representative      | Loyalty Index (%) | Grade |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Ken Walsh           | 66                | F     |
| Melissa Nikolakakos | 66                | F     |
| George Nikolakakos  | 67                | F     |
| John Fitzpatrick    | 67                | F     |
| Linda Reksten       | 69                | F     |
| Brad Barker         | 69                | F     |
| David Bedey         | 70                | F     |
| Llew Jones          | 72                | F     |
| Marta Bertoglio     | 73                | F     |
| Julie Darling       | 73                | F     |
| Sherry Essmann      | 74                | F     |

House: “Loyal Republicans”

Senate: “Republicans Democrats Can Count

On”

| Senator          | Loyalty Index (%) | Grade |
|------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Russ Tempel      | 44                | F     |
| Wendy McKamey    | 48                | F     |
| Greg Hunter      | 50                | F     |
| Gayle Lammers    | 55                | F     |
| Josh Kassmier    | 56                | F     |
| Shelley Vance    | 59                | F     |
| Jason Ellsworth  | 56                | F     |
| Bruce Gillespie  | 61                | F     |
| Denley Loge      | 62                | F     |
| Michael Yakawich | 74                | F     |

Senate: “Loyal Republicans”

| Senator          | Loyalty Index (%) | Grade |
|------------------|-------------------|-------|
| Becky Beard      | 96                | A     |
| Mark Noland      | 97                | A     |
| Bob Phalen       | 97                | A     |
| Tony Tezak       | 96                | A     |
| John Fuller      | 95                | A     |
| Matt Regier      | 97                | A     |
| Dennis Lenz      | 95                | A     |
| Theresa Manzella | 95                | A     |
| Carl Glimm       | 99                | A     |
| Barry Usher      | 96                | A     |

*All data from 2025 LegisStats website.*

Notes on Methodologies

Freedom Index (JBS) scores are narrow—only six votes selected for constitutional significance.

CFG Economic Scorecard covers every “economic-liberty” vote but doesn’t list by bill.

CPAC and AFP both rely on rotating “key-vote” sets and require downloading an interactive report for details.

LegisStats tracks every vote for pure caucus-loyalty and crossover metrics.

By reviewing all five, you can see:

**Constitutional fidelity** (JBS Freedom Index)

**Economic-liberty alignment** (Club for Growth)

**Conservative voting consistency** (CPAC & AFP)

**Caucus loyalty vs. crossover tendency** (LegisStats)

Use whichever lens fits your advocacy or research goals most closely. 📌