

Cascade County Candidate Line Up In June 2026 Primary

WRITTEN BY
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If you believe it is too early to start talking about your June, 2026 Primary, you may be assisting Democrat, Republicans In Name Only (RINO) and Liberals overcome the Republican party of Cascade County.

In three (3) short months it will be time for County candidates to file for seats. Democrats and RINOs have already begun recruiting candidates to infiltrate the Republican brand. Authentic conservative Republicans are behind the proverbial 8-ball.

Here’s a glimpse at how soon deadlines will be upon us:

January 2026	County candidate official filing opens. Candidates can officially start campaigning.
March 2026	Close of candidate filing for County candidates
April 2026	Deadline for write-in candidates who missed the March filing date. County Central Committees submit lists of electors to serve as Election Judges in the upcoming Primary
May 2026	Close of voter registration
June 2026	PRIMARY ELECTION, First Tuesday in June

Who has Filed So Far?

The below chart shows candidates from Cascade County who have indicated they are running for vacant seats. Some County incumbents are not confirmed, but are named for reference. At this point, there are two seats that will Primary this June 2026. Vote Wisely.

Democrat Candidates Running As Republicans in Cascade County

Cascade County has a big political year ahead in 2026. Knowing your candidates is going to be all too important in electing true conservatives of your Republican party. The race to claim the coveted “R” has already begun.

On August 28, 2025, current Cascade County Attorney, Josh Racki, loudly proclaimed he was moving from the Democrat party and turning RED. The stamp of “R” was provided by a self-penned press-release. Just as was so with your County Sheriff, Jesse Slaughter, in 2022 and your County Clerk of Courts, Tina Henry in 2024.

These three county officials turned Republican have not attended Cascade County Republican Central Committee meetings to receive support, acknowledgement, nor endorsement as a Republicans. Perhaps none of them has even read the Republican Party Platform to know how differently a Republican represents constituents versus representation by a Democrat. There seems to be no vetting process outlined to become a Republican candidate.

These cross-overs are purely *Political*.

This is a distraction for voters, intended to have them believe in a candidate based on the letter behind their name. Think about it . . . does the coveted “R” magically change the behavior, thinking and management skills of an elected official? Did it change the Cascade County Sheriff’s performance? Did it change the County Clerk of Courts performance? All are actually Democrats using the “R” behind their names to secure votes.

This political branding has no merit, yet uninformed voters typically search for a letter, rather than seek the integrity of the candidate that claims it.

The magic wand has been waved but, does anything change? Very doubtful.

Eyes on the Ball Cascade County. This is a political distraction. Don’t be distracted by the *whoopla* surrounding announcements of politicians *moving to the other side*. If residents of Cascade County believe a new County Attorney is in order, changing the letter behind the same name is not the answer!

Is This Individual A Known Conservative?		YES	NO
COUNTY LEVEL SEATS IN 2026			
Cascade County Commissioner, District 2	Tom Lynch		✓
County Attorney	Josh Racki – incumbent		✓
County Sheriff	Jesse Slaughter – incumbent		✓
County Treasurer	Diane Heikkila – incumbent	✓	
County Clerk & Recorder	Sandra Merchant – incumbent	✓	
Public Administrator	Gerald Boland - incumbent		✓
Justice Court Judge	Eric Bailey - incumbent	✓	
Justice Court Judge	Steve Fagenstrom – incumbent		✓
STATE SEAT IN CASCADE COUNTY			
HD 20 (Cascade County)	Tony Rosales	✓	
HD 21 (Cascade County)	Trevor Funseth	✓	
HD 21 (Cascade County)	Eric Peterson		✓
HD 22 (Cascade County)	Kevin Leatherbarrow	✓	
HD 23 (Cascade County)	Eric Tilleman – incumbent		✓
HD 24 (Cascade County)	Steve Fitzpatrick - incumbent		✓
HD 25 (Cascade County)	Steve Gist - incumbent	✓	
HD 26 (Cascade County)	Russ Miner - incumbent		✓
SD 10 (Cascade County)	Jessica Dyrdaahl	✓	
SD 10 (Cascade County)	Melissa Nikolakakos		✓
SD 11 (Cascade County)	George Nikolakakos		✓
SD 12 (Cascade County)	Wendy McKamey		✓
Public Service Commission, District 1	Jeff Pattison	✓	
Public Service Commission, District 1	Jeremy Trebas	✓	
STATE SEATS IN SURROUNDING AREAS			
HD 17 (Teton/Lewis & Clark Counties)	Justin Cleveland	✓	
HD 17 (Teton/ Lewis & Clark Counties)	Stephen LaPraim		✓
HD 18 (Teton/Lewis&Clark/Pondera/ Toole Counties	James Coombs	✓	
HD 78 (Broadwater/Cascade/Fergus/ Gallatin/Judith Basin/Meagher/ Sweetgrass/Wheatland Counties)	Randyn Gregg	✓	
SD 9 (Lewis & Clark/Pondera/Toole/ Teton Counties)	Zack Wirth	✓	
SD 9 (Lewis & Clark/Pondera/Toole/ Teton Counties)	Llew Jones		✓
SD 42 (Lewis & Clark County)	Nick Lancett	✓	



Jesse Slaughter



Tina Henry

Libertarian Candidates Running as Republicans from Cascade County

At first one has to think, *Why not; everyone else is?* However, this is not the case with these local Libertarians. They are not jumping on the “R” bandwagon to further infiltrate the Cascade County Republican party, but rather to join forces with true conservative Republicans in the trenches and increase the number of conservative candidates running for office. These local Libertarians share Republican ideals such as support for free market, concern for fiscal responsibility, prioritizing national security, respect for Rule of Law and value of Constitutional principles.

In 2024, Kevin Leatherbarrow and Tony Rosales embarked on a citizen investigation into the murder of Michael Hanson that occurred in February of 2023. They highlight their analysis to the public by podcasts produced under the name “The Cascade Effect”, found at the website of the same name. This website also describes their awareness campaign as, “A true-crime anthology podcast investigating corruption and negligence of law enforcement in Cascade County, Montana, a county that is known for its heavy-handed police work as well as the incarceration and harassment of innocent civilians. “

Three Cascade County Libertarians are



Josh Racki

running as Republicans for Montana State Legislature seats in June of 2026. As of now, Kevin Leatherbarrow and Tony Rosales have no Republican opponents for the June, 2026 Primary. However, Libertarian Jessica Dyrdaahl challenges known “Republican In Name Only”, Melissa Nikolakakos for the SD10 seat in the upcoming June 2026 Primary election. Melissa and her husband, George Nikolakakos, live in Cascade County. They took out conservative Republicans for their legislative seats in the Primary of June, 2024 and both voted mostly Democrat values in the 2025 legislative session.

