

2026 MAR State Meetings, Helena, MT

1/28 – 1/30/26

Attendee: Jennifer C.K. Hargett

Attended:

1/28/26 – Putting AI to Work for You – The Extended Cut / 4CE

1/28/26 – Montana Water Matters: Managing Quality, Septic Systems and Water Rights Luncheon

1/28/26 – Government Affairs Committee

1/28/26 – Round Up for RPAC

1/29/26 – Montana's Changing Economy Lunch

1/30/26 – MAR Board of Directors Meeting

Putting AI to Work for You – The Extended Cut

Thought this was a particularly timely and comprehensive class with instruction as well as strategy. Two biggest takeaways: Presentation of an overarching plan of how to integrate AI into daily agent activities for more efficient and enhanced production across the entire spectrum. Having AI create a list for children of relocating family to assist parents with engaging children of ranging ages in the moving process, facilitate buy in, add value across the board. Appreciated introduction of some new products/resources and demonstrations of their capabilities. I requested a class such as this in my survey following the fall meetings and am very appreciative to see the follow through. This is obviously an important topic for many.

Montana Water Matters: Managing Quality, Septic Systems and Water Rights

Very good program, notes full of facts, updates and general information regarding new roles of DEQ and DNRC. Were provided with a deep dive into Water Bill changes projected for 2027 Legislative Session. Decisions going forth will be based upon new case law and the upcoming legislative session.

Government Affairs Committee

Exempt Well Lawsuit – MAR is moving toward participation in defense with Well Drillers, Builders, AG Alliance.

Idaho Water Bill – Sub Water Working Group will be meeting to determine position based on Idaho Water Bill. Ultimate decisions will be judicial. GAC needs to develop strategy, coalesce more industry groups to support MAR position. Propose creating 501c3 to facilitate involvement. Ultimately, must determine who is actually putting water to use and amounts being used/How do you prove claims actually being used? Sub Water Working Group will be drafting position letter for submission to Exec Comm.

HB231 and SB542 – Property Tax litigation, can easily see rulings coming down against legislative action regarding SB542. There will most likely be a second lawsuit regarding the treatment of similar taxpayers within the same class being treated differently. Much case law to support this. There might possibly be a third lawsuit coming out of Wyoming regarding natural gas pipeline/energy transmission/interstate commerce issues. Precedent for this pertains to Feds dealing with same interstate commerce issues with railroads. Montana projected to lose energy revenue within 2-3 years, significant economic impact to the state projected. Montana has now been designated as having the most progressive and worst tax system in the country. Next movement in the tax discussion will be sales tax.

CI130 – Seeing no movement on this issue at this time.

FPC/Federal Political Coordinator Reports – More is being done legislatively at the federal level for housing than we see.

Other Topics:

Uptick in E&O lawsuits

Water Education Campaign

Property Insurance

Round Up for RPAC

Attended, made \$1,000 contribution in addition to \$99 contribution made via dues payment. Appreciate the gravity of the many issues that will be impacting the industry legislatively in the very near future. Enjoyed the networking and socializing.

Montana's Changing Economy Lunch – Montana Chamber of Commerce

Pillars – Business Climate/Infrastructure/Workforce Development/Entrepreneurship

Business Climate –

TIF

75% Success rate legislatively

Property Taxes – legislative failure

State Government – funded through income tax which covers corrections, medicare and big ticket items/property tax which covers local governments. There will always be winners and losers, no other way without an additional revenue stream. A tax shift is not tax reform. Natural Resources industry is dwindling. Currently, the state does not have a tax structure that aligns with the economy. High tech industry is growing - Optics, Photonics primarily concentrated in Bozeman. Bioscience industry is growing at 12X, concentrated in Hamilton. Recreation industry is growing at 2X. Manufacturing is experiencing slower moderate growth. Tourism is double 1990, but not growing as fast as recent years. It is a 5Bil industry. Where do we go from here – Sales Tax. Current polling shows 73% against. Polling is more favorable if Sales Tax option is tied to Property Tax Relief. Current property tax system in Montana is off the charts progressive and incomprehensible. Going in current direction, we will all be taxed at higher levels year over year. MT Chamber of Commerce and Real Estate Industry have to lead this discussion, elected leaders will not. Assurance must be provided that Sales Tax would be a replacement tax, not an add on. Must be cap on spending, must be cap on sales tax. Existing lawsuit may force special State legislative session, will be dominant issue in 2027 legislative session. Must be a constitutional amendment to require all revenue from sales tax to go toward property tax reduction. Univ of MT BBER program addressing Sales Tax right now. Reality is we are already taxing tourists on lodging, gas and rental cars. Even with a sales tax, revenue generation from sales tax will not be at the level expected or desired. Will be a 20/80 scenario, not 80/20. Realtors impact at the grassroots imperative. Research show a 4% sales tax would eliminate half of the property taxes in state, then it would get very complicated with local option taxes, etc. Political will needs to increase, expenses need to decrease.

MAR Board of Directors Meeting

Angela Klein Hughes took over as 2026 President and presented her thoughts on forward action and how we will proceed in the new year. There were no committee motions brought forward for consideration/action. Following reports were heard: Governance
Restructure/President/Treasurer/CEO/Legal Counsel.