

CITIZEN LEGISLATOR

The Montana

It's worth the trip to Helena every other year during Montana's legislative session just to walk the halls, climb the stairs and lean against the marble columns to watch and listen.

Soak up the buzz of legislators and lobbyists meeting, greeting, teaching or negotiating the finer points of law-making. Pages rush about. Everybody in a hurry, half of everybody with a cell phone screwed to the ear.

You get the sense that you know these people. They are quick to make eye contact, generous with a greeting.

They are the citizen legislators of Montana. Perhaps they will go on to national office like our Montana delegation in Washington. Our senators and congressman all served in the legislature, and their own words about the experience are on page 12.

And here, under the stylized picture of the Montana House of Representatives while in session with Rep. Shannon Augare, D-Browning, at the gavel, is a cross-section of our 150 men and women now in session in Helena.

Talking about how they are taking care of your business. In their own words.

Photos provided by legislators.



Rep. Pat Ingraham
R-Thompson Falls

What tipped me over to becoming a legislative candidate was when I realized that I had something unique that I could offer.

It took two days of soul searching, questioning, trying to understand the depth of this responsibility if I undertook the commitment to the people, and with my faith in God and my commitment to serve Him honorably wherever I am placed.

I had the support of my family and some very dear friends, too.

The downside of being a citizen legislator is you find that, while you want to fairly represent all your constituents, you really can't.

They each are as different as night and day.

But you have been sent to make a decision and that decision doesn't always please everyone.



Rep. Franke Wilmer
D-Bozeman

I support the idea of more women serving in elected office. Young women especially comment on how good it makes them feel to see us doing what we do.

I don't know anyone who likes to raise money, but it was much easier to raise money for a legislative campaign than it would be to run for Congress.

I had the best experience when I knocked on my first voter's door.

As I approached, the voter was in his yard doing spring yard work. There were other people around who all left when they realized I was a candidate.

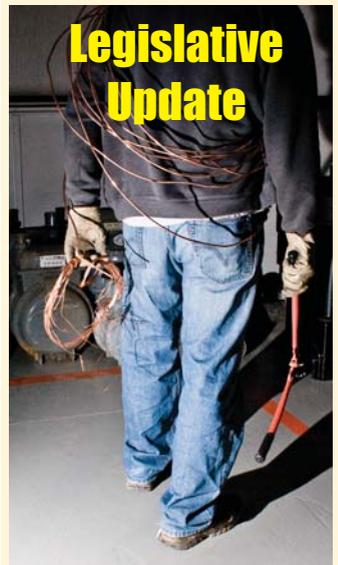
After he asked about the fourth time whether I had been on TV, I said "No sir, I don't have enough money to buy TV ads yet." To which he replied, "Well stay right here and I'll go get you some." He went into his house and came back with a \$20 bill.



Sen. Mike Cooney
D-Helena

The direction of our state can swing in dramatically different directions on the power of one vote. I admire anyone willing to run for office at any level, as our government will always only be as good as the quality of the people that comprise that government.

The Capitol is a beautiful building, and I never walk into this special building without feeling a real sense of awe. Standing in the Rotunda, where so much happens and where history has been made, reminds me how fortunate I am to be working on behalf of my constituents.



Copper theft, SB247

Your co-op's statewide association bill to address copper theft from utility substations and other utility facilities, cleared the Montana Senate Feb. 3 on a 44-5 vote. No one spoke against the bill on the floor.

The legislative team applauded grassroots teams for contacting senators to urge a green light for SB 247

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Jerry Black, R-Shelby, seeks to give law enforcement a tool for tracking down copper thieves using minimal record keeping by salvage metal dealers.

Carbon storage, SB66

SB 66 would require the Board of Environmental Review to adopt sequestration standards for CO₂. It was tabled in the Senate Energy and Tele-communications Committee Jan. 23.

Opponents testified many of the bill's provisions are not necessary because they are already covered in Montana. SB 66 was introduced by Sen. Ron Erickson, D-Missoula.

Stimulus Bill analysis

The federal stimulus bill was headed for conference committee to iron out differences between House and Senate versions of the bill. *RM* will report on its effects on energy and your light bill.



Sen. Kim Gillan
D-Billings

Last summer, the person re-roofing my house commented about my being a politician with a big salary.

I said, "Are you kidding? You'll make more re-roofing my house than I make during the legislative session."

I get calls from people who assume I am Kim Gillan's staff person.

When they hear the dog bark, they are puzzled, then I explain, "It's me, Kim."

My children always have enjoyed coming to Helena. They don't enjoy going with me to the grocery store in Billings where I would run into folks and listen to their problems.



Sen. Taylor Brown
R-Huntley

The biggest thing I had to overcome was to make the decision to dump the entire load of managing our company on the shoulders of my wife, Shannon. There is no possible way that I could do this without her tremendous personal sacrifice.

One must develop a tough skin, and learn not to be offended or to take things personally when the media, or those with opposing viewpoints say something about you that hurts, or is unfair, or is flat untrue.

I rely strongly on my faith in God, and I pray a lot.



Rep. Scott Reichner
R-Bigfork

The day before coming down to Helena, the reality of it was all coming to a head. I started complaining.

That same day I opened up the *Daily Interlake* newspaper to a story about 150 Montana servicemen called up to fight the war on terror. They were to report next day, the same day I was to report.

I realized how much of a sacrifice they were going through, so much more than my own. I figured, if they can go for a year and leave their families, and not just for four months, when I can go home on weekends, I'd better keep my mouth shut and get to work.