

From: YouGov

To: Issue One

Re: Survey results on campaign finance reform in Montana

Date: October 28, 2025

On behalf of Issue One, YouGov fielded a sample of 410 registered voters in Montana. The survey fielded from October 7 to October 20, 2025. The survey included measures of Montana voters' priorities, their views toward the role of money in politics, and their views on a potential upcoming ballot measure in the state. This memo briefly summarizes the results.

Executive Summary

- Montana voters support efforts to limit corporate and dark money spending in elections. When presented with the text of a proposed state ballot measure to eliminate corporate and dark money spending in elections, **fully 74% of Montana voters said they would favor the measure.**
 - This includes **majorities of Democrats (84%), Republicans (69%), and independents (64%), and majorities across other key demographic factors.** Just 11% said they opposed this proposed ballot measure; the other 15% were uncertain.
- Across partisanship, Montana voters are concerned about the role of money in politics generally. Large majorities across the political spectrum say that when wealthy individuals and corporations make large independent expenditures, **it creates the appearance of corruption and reduces their trust in democracy.**
- Large majorities across the political spectrum also say that **allowing unlimited amounts of money in our elections makes our democracy weaker** because it gives wealthy special interests too much influence over the decisions our politicians make. They also say that **strong anti-corruption rules strengthen our democracy and constitutional rights** by ensuring equal political representation for all, regardless of wealth.
- Voters also continue to support the principles behind Initiative 166, the 2012 ballot measure that established a state policy that corporations are not entitled to constitutional rights — such as First Amendment free speech rights. **About 72% of respondents said they agree with the decision to pass this policy.**
- At the same time, voters in Montana remain chiefly concerned with issues such as the cost of living, the availability of housing, and access to healthcare, with money in politics as a comparatively lower priority. **Nevertheless, 3 in 10 Montanans rank money in politics as one of their top five national issues.**

Ballot Measure Results

Respondents in Montana were given the text of a proposed 2026 ballot initiative that would reduce corporate and dark money spending in elections. Specifically, Montanans were asked:

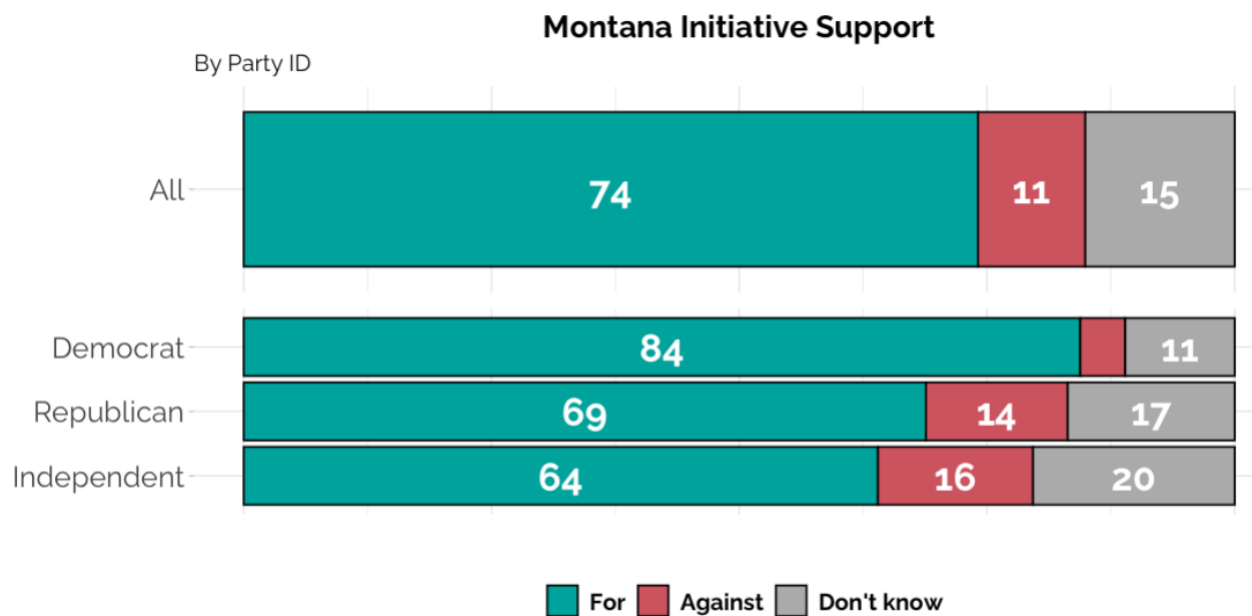
As you may know, there is a new effort to eliminate corporate spending in Montana elections that has been submitted as a ballot measure for the 2026 election. The measure description submitted to the Montana Secretary of State reads:

A constitutional initiative that would add a new section to Article XIII of the Montana Constitution to define the powers of artificial persons, including corporations, as only those the constitution expressly grants and provide that artificial persons have no power to spend money or anything of value on elections or ballot issues. The initiative affirms that the people of Montana did not intend for artificial persons to have the power to spend on elections or ballot issues. This act provides that actions beyond those expressly granted powers are void. The initiative provides that political committees may be granted the power to spend on elections and ballot issues. It allows enforcement through forfeiture of state-conferred privileges. The initiative includes a severability clause that ensures that valid portions of the initiative remain effective if other parts are invalidated.

If the 2026 election were being held today, would you vote... [for or against the measure]

If the election were held today, 74% of Montana voters said they would vote for the measure, 11% said they would vote against, and 15% were unsure.

Support extended across key demographic and political groups, with majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents — as well as majorities across age, gender, and educational categories — backing the initiative.



The data indicate that support for the proposed 2026 ballot measure remains high even when voters are presented with common counterarguments and tradeoffs. When reminded that the same restrictions could apply to labor unions as well as corporations,

38% said this would make *no difference* in their view of the proposal, **44%** said it would make them *more comfortable*, and only **18%** said it would make them *less comfortable*.

Similarly, when asked to consider whether restrictions might impact candidates or causes they personally support, **79%** said they would still support eliminating corporate and dark money campaign spending, even if doing so negatively affected their preferred candidates and ballot measures. Majorities of Democrats, Republicans, and independents — as well as majorities across every major age, race, gender, and education group — shared this view.

These results are consistent with previous expressions of support for state-level reforms limiting corporate influence in Montana's elections. Respondents were asked:

In 2012, Montana voters approved a ballot measure establishing a state policy that corporations are not entitled to constitutional rights — such as First Amendment free speech rights — because they are not human beings. Do you [agree or disagree] with this policy?

About **72%** of Montanans expressed continued support for this initiative, including about **70%** of both Democrats and Republicans.

The Role of Money in Politics

Across multiple measures, Montana voters expressed concern about the influence of money in politics, as well as disagreement with the assumptions underlying the U.S. Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* decision.

When asked:

Do you agree or disagree with the Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United that corporations and labor unions have a First Amendment right to spend unlimited money to influence elections?

Fully 63% of Montanans disagreed with the Supreme Court on this question, including 69% of Democrats, 75% of independents, and 56% of Republicans.

Large majorities also rejected the Supreme Court's central assumptions in *Citizens United*:

- **85%** agreed that "large independent expenditures by wealthy donors and corporations in elections give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption," including 89% of Democrats, 75% of independents, and 85% of Republicans.
- **82%** agreed that "if a wealthy donor or corporation gains influence over or access to an elected official, I consider that official to be corrupt," including 86% of Democrats, 75% of independents, and 80% of Republicans.
- **81%** agreed that "the appearance of wealthy donors or corporations gaining influence over or access to elected officials causes me to lose faith in this

democracy," including 90% of Democrats, 70% of independents, and 77% of Republicans.

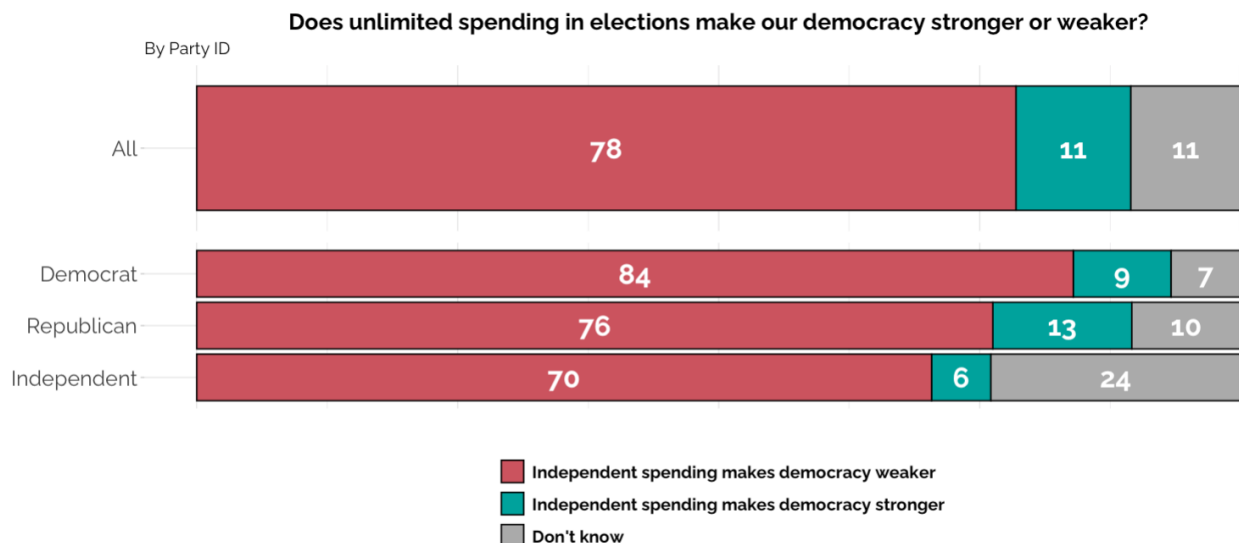
Support for these reforms persisted even when respondents were asked to consider tradeoffs concerning freedom of speech. Voters were asked:

Even if it isn't exactly right, which of the following is closer to your view?

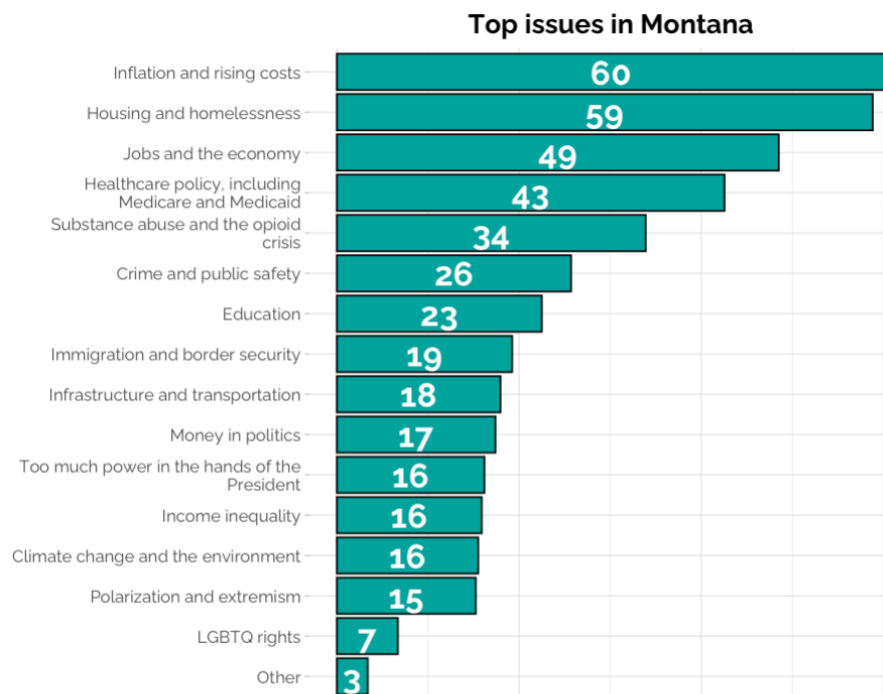
- *Allowing people and organizations to spend unlimited amounts of money in our elections makes our democracy weaker, because it gives wealthy special interests too much influence over the decisions our politicians make*
- *Allowing people and organizations to spend unlimited amounts of money in our elections makes our democracy stronger, because it protects the constitutional right to free speech*
- *Not sure*

In response, **78% of Montana voters said that unlimited spending makes democracy *weaker***, because it gives wealthy special interests too much influence over political decisions. Only **11%** said it makes democracy *stronger* by protecting free speech, and **11%** were unsure.

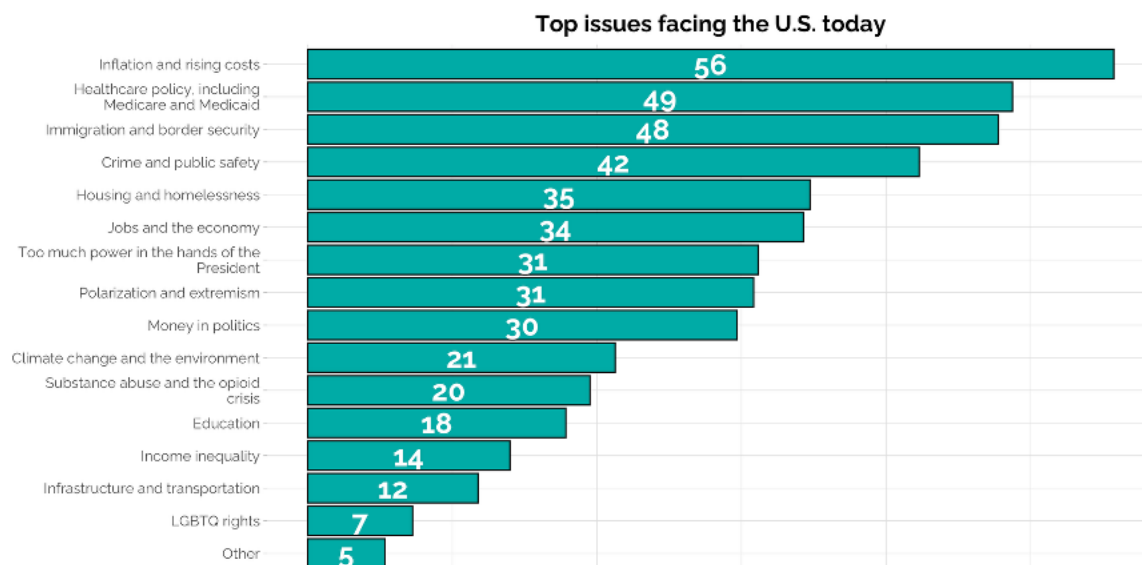
Even when reminded of the free speech arguments often used to justify independent expenditures, Montanans overwhelmingly concluded that such spending weakens democracy. These views were consistent across party lines and demographic groups.



At the same time, Montanans remain primarily focused on economic and quality-of-life issues. When asked at the top of the survey to name the top issues facing the state, voters most frequently cited the cost of living, the availability of housing, jobs and the economy, and access to healthcare.



However, when asked about the top issues facing the country, approximately 30% of voters identified money in politics as one of their top 5 national issues — a notable level of salience for a structural reform issue that does not typically dominate daily political discourse. These results suggest that while reforming campaign finance is not a top “kitchen table” issue, Montana voters strongly support reforms to the current campaign finance system when presented with opportunities to do so.



Conclusion

Montana voters express broad and durable support for efforts to reduce the influence of money in politics. Large, crosspartisan majorities disagree with the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United* and reject its core assumptions.

These attitudes are reflected in overwhelming support for a potential 2026 ballot measure that would eliminate corporate and dark money spending in Montana elections. Fully 74% of voters said they would vote for the measure if the election were held today, including majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans, as well as majority support across gender, age, race, and education groups.

This support for reform persists even when voters are reminded of potential tradeoffs, such as free speech concerns or restrictions that might apply equally to unions as well as corporations. The survey also finds that most Montanans continue to endorse the principles behind previous state actions to combat the influence of big money in politics, such as the 2012 initiative affirming that corporations are not entitled to the constitutional rights of individual citizens. Across nearly every measure tested, voters in Montana see large political expenditures as a source of corruption and support reforms to curb them.

Methods Statement

This survey is based on 410 interviews conducted by YouGov on the internet of registered voters in Montana. The sample was weighted according to gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, and Montana geographic region based on voter registration lists, the U.S. Census American Community Survey, and the U.S. Census Current Population Survey, as well as 2020 Presidential vote and approximate 2024 Presidential vote based on available results. Respondents were selected from YouGov to be representative of registered voters. The weights range from 0.18 to 4.3 with a mean of 1 and a standard deviation of 0.65.

The margin of error (a 95% confidence interval) for a sample percentage p based upon the subsetting sample is approximately 5.8%. It is calculated using the formula:

$$\hat{p} \pm 100 \times \sqrt{\frac{1 + CV^2}{n}}$$

where CV is the coefficient of variation of the sample weights and n is the sample size used to compute the proportion. This is a measure of sampling error (the average of all estimates obtained using the same sample selection and weighting procedures repeatedly). The sample estimate should differ from its expected value by less than margin of error in 95% of all samples. It does not reflect non-sampling errors, including potential selection bias in panel participation or in response to a particular survey.