

RESOLUTION 24-_____

**A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE
2025 MONTANA STATE LEGISLATURE'S 69th SESSION**

WHEREAS, the 69th Montana State Legislature will begin January 2, 2025. It is important to identify legislative priorities to guide city administration, staff, local elected officials, and our lobbyist; and

WHEREAS, included within our legislative priorities are our closest legislative partners, the Montana League of Cities and Towns (MLCT), and the Yellowstone County attorney's office. The MLCT is an incorporated, nonpartisan, nonprofit association of 127 Montana municipalities. The League's sole purpose is the cooperative improvement of municipal government in Montana. It acts as a clearinghouse through which the municipalities cooperate for their mutual benefit. Billings has active board representation in the MLCT.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT THE BILLINGS, MONTANA CITY COUNCIL adopts the following priorities for the 2025 Legislative Session:

1. Public Safety - Support legislation providing enhanced safety, health and security for Billings residents; fight drug abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking and associated crime; reduce vagrancy, homelessness and increase resources for mental health services.

This support includes the following proposed or potential legislation:

- Generally revise theft laws (Sen. Usher's SB 95)
- Youth Court Act revisions (Rep. Mercer's HB 614)
- Revise laws relating to dangerous drugs (Rep. Baum's HB 301)
- Support, in general, the Yellowstone County Attorney's and the Montana County Attorneys Association legislative priorities.
- Support legislation to expand the incarceration capacity at the state level.
- Support laws to increase possible charges and/or penalties when partner/family violence is committed in the presence of a minor.

- Support reforms and improvements to Montana’s behavioral health and developmental disabilities service systems, including the priorities set by the Behavioral Health System for Future Generations (BHSFG) Commission.
2. Housing—Support legislation that promotes housing abundance, affordability, and promoting home ownership for citizens. Support, in general, the Governor’s Housing Task Force recommendations, particularly:
- R3—Identify, evaluate, and implement building code reforms to lower housing construction costs and timelines without compromising safety, especially for missing middle housing.
 - R14—Substantially increase state funding for the Housing Montana Fund (HMF)-Affordable Housing Revolving Loan Fund (AHRLF).
 - R16—Draft and introduce legislation to establish a State Housing Tax Credit program.
 - R17—Draft and introduce legislation to authorize an additional \$50 million in funding from the Coal Trust Tax Fund for the Coal Trust Multifamily Homes (CTMH) program and provide more flexible terms for loans made under the CTMH program.
 - R20—Address the challenges of obtaining affordable property and casualty insurance for homes. (Note: Includes a section on reducing Montana’s higher 10-year statute of repose for construction defect litigation, likely a factor in minimal condo construction)
 - R21—Leverage state resources and expertise to decrease the costs of pro-housing reform implementation and draft legislation for an ongoing appropriation for planning grants to local and tribal governments for planning and zoning to increase housing supply.
3. Economic Development - Support legislation that facilitates private investment in Billings.
- Tax Increment Finance (TIF)—Support preservation of TIF as economic development tool, offering Billings’ TIF resolution as a good governance model. (I.e. requiring uniform reporting from districts, governance/ethics training for boards, a minimum 5:1 ratio of private:public investment, and elected official approval for all allocations, with exceptions for projects under \$100,000)

4. Medicaid Expansion Reauthorization—Support reauthorization of Medicaid Expansion, preferably removing the sunset.
 - o Reauthorization of Medicaid Expansion would provide additional revenue for certain City services, including Crisis Response Units.
5. Infrastructure - Support legislation that increases investments in infrastructure critical to supporting our economy.
6. Shift Tax Burden - Support legislation shifting the tax burden from Billings property owners to users of government services, where appropriate.
7. MLCT/Self Governing Powers - Support, in general, the Montana League of Cities and Towns Legislative Resolutions.

The Billings, Montana City Council hereby recognizes, concurs, and supports the priorities expressed herein.

PASSED, ADOPTED and APPROVED on this ____ day of September, 2024.

CITY OF BILLINGS

BY: _____
William A. Cole, Mayor

ATTEST:

BY: _____
Denise R. Bohlman, City Clerk