

Know Before You Go: MT-AL District Primer

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The special election to replace Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke in Montana's At-Large congressional district is scheduled for May 25th, 2017. The candidates are two political newcomers: **Democrat Rob Quist**, a popular Montana musician and activist, and **Republican Greg Gianforte**, a multi-millionaire tech engineer who recently lost a bid for Governor in 2016 against Democrat Steve Bullock. Although Republicans have held Montana's At-Large congressional district for two decades, Gianforte has now faced several weeks of bad press for his support for the AHCA which could lead to nearly 14% of Montanans to lose their health coverage. Quist has been quickly gaining ground in polls heading into election day, and with your help we can FLIP MONTANA!



Key Dates

Last day of Voter Registration: April 25, 2017

Early Voting Begins: May 1, 2017

Absentee Voting Begins: May 3, 2017

Election Day: Thursday, May 25, 2017

Quist vs. Gianforte

MT-AL has been represented by a Republican since 1997, most recently by Rep. Zinke who won in 2014 and 2016 with 55% and 56% of the vote, respectively. Zinke stepped down on March 1, 2017 to become the U. S. Secretary of Interior, prompting a special election on May 25th between:

Population Centers

- Helena (capital): 75,577
- Billings: 108,134
- Missoula: 69,190
- Great Falls: 59,563
- Bozeman: 40,319
- Kalispell: 21,142
- Montana total: 1,042,520

2016 Presidential Results

- Trump (R): 279K (56.2%)
- Clinton (D): 178K (35.7%)

2016 House Results

- Ryan Zinke (R): 285K (56.2%)
- Denise Juneau (D): 206K (40.5%)

2014 House Results

- Ryan Zinke (R): 204K (55.4%)
- John Lewis (D): 149K (40.4%)

- **Rob Quist** (D), the son of Cut Bank ranchers, is known for his musical career with the Mission Mountain Wood Band, Montana Band, and a solo career. He is a small business owner, served on the board of the Montana Arts Council, and was a spokesman and fundraiser for the Montana Food Bank Network. Quist is running on a platform of investing in infrastructure and manufacturing, ensuring affordable health care, protecting public lands, and advancing Montana agriculture.
- **Greg Gianforte** (R) is a computer and telecommunications engineer and businessman, unsuccessfully running for Governor of Montana in 2016, losing to incumbent Gov. Steve Bullock (D) with 46.4% of the vote. He is known for his support of Christian and conservative groups including Focus on the Family, the Heritage Foundation and a creationist museum in Montana. Gianforte opposes abortion and same-sex marriage, and favors defunding Planned Parenthood, repealing the Affordable Care Act, and supports Trump's proposal to cut the budget of federal agencies managing public lands.

MT-AL: Better Know a District

Geography

Montana's At-Large district covers the entire state. It's the country's largest congressional district by population with 1.04 million constituents and the second largest by land area, covering an area of 147,040 square miles. The state contains more than 27 million acres of federally controlled land. The state's major population centers are largely in the western half of the state, with the eastern half characterized by prairie terrain and badlands.

Demographics

Eighty-nine percent of the state's population identifies as white. Much of Montana's Hispanic population, numbering about 37,302, is concentrated around the Billings area and have been in the state for generations. The state's 65,000 citizens of Native American heritage comprise 6.3 percent of the population, the sixth highest in the U.S. The largest religious affiliations of the people of Montana are Protestant (47%) and Catholic (23%).

Industries

Cattle ranching is central to Montana's history and economy, which is primarily based on agriculture, including ranching and cereal grain farming. Other significant economic activities include oil, gas, coal and hardrock mining, lumber and the fastest-growing sector, tourism, with over 10 million tourists annually visiting Glacier National Park and Yellowstone National Park. The state's unemployment rate was 3.8 percent as of March 2017.

Elections

Despite strong support for Trump in the 2016 election, politics in the state remain competitive with Democrats traditionally holding an edge thanks to the support among unionized miners and railroad workers. The governorship has also been held by a Democrat since 2005. Jon Tester, a Democrat, has held one of the two U.S. Senate seats since 2006, while the other seat had also been held by a Democrat for decades before losing to Republican Steve Daines in 2014.

Current Trends

According to one Montana political observer, "Issues like a clean and healthful environment helps Democrats some places compared to other states." Campaign finance issues are also an important for Montana moderates: "They resonate more in Montana than almost everywhere else." Quist supports an amendment to overturn Citizens United and reduce the political influence of corporations.

Learn more

For a deeper analysis of the MT-AL election, [read this article](#) by BuzzFeed News.