

Resolution #2026-1

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

BACKGROUND

The cities and towns of Montana provide clean water, a sanitary environment, police and fire protection, transportation, and recreational opportunities for residents, businesses, and visitors. Our unique, vibrant communities provide the services that enable and grow all sectors of the Montana economy. To provide quality, cost-effective municipal services, municipalities must wisely and efficiently use their limited financial resources.

Local governments are closest to the people, and as such, local processes, authority, and decision-making should be respected and supported by state and federal governments. Any attempt to undermine or weaken any municipality's process, authority, or decision-making is considered an attempt to undermine the strength of local government as a whole. We will support each other and openly communicate with each other to address challenges and pursue opportunities impacting cities and towns, knowing the success of one is the success of all. United we stand, divided we fall.

The Montana League of Cities and Towns' mission is to preserve and promote Montana municipalities, the services they provide, and the economies they support.

ACTION

For the 2027 Legislative Session and interim, the League will stand by the following principles of fair, affordable, and effective local government:

1. Establish a fair, efficient, stable, and transparent property tax system that allows municipalities to set the revenues needed to pay for the services demanded by residents, provides taxpayers with the information to understand and evaluate the cost and benefits of those local services, avoids disproportionately burdening lower-value residential property owners, preserves the entitlement share payment and other existing sources of revenue to municipalities, and provides authority for municipalities to seek and develop new sources of revenue to fund essential local services.
2. Seek improvements to Montana's property valuation system, ensuring the transparent capture of all newly taxable property, accurately assessing the market value of different types of property, addressing volatile fluctuations in the market, and helping develop alternative methods to site-specific appraisals such as mass appraisal. Such improvements will help spread local service costs over the greatest amount of payers, fairly account for impacts on services from new residents, and ensure existing taxpayers do not shoulder an unfair proportion of service costs.
3. Promote improvements to and diversification of the current local government finance structure to develop supplements and alternatives to property tax revenue.
4. Encourage the coordination, streamlining, maintenance, expansion, and improvement of federal and state grant, loan, and investment programs to fund infrastructure capital improvements to supplement the use of local funds, reduce administrative duplication and reporting, and enhance

access to funding. Specifically, encourage the allocation of funds directly to local governments and development of centralized state-level application and reporting processes or systems.

5. Uphold local ability to pass mill levies by a majority vote to empower residents to prioritize local service levels and support policies that encourage, not discourage, voter engagement.
6. Advocate that new legal mandates imposed upon municipalities have an identified source of additional funding and are not an unfunded mandate imposed upon municipalities.
7. Support improvements to statutes, regulations, rules, and policies that encourage the development of unique, vibrant, healthy, and safe communities with adequate, safe housing attainable for all residents through more efficient and cost-effective delivery of clean water, treatment and disposal of wastewater and solid waste, protection of municipal water rights, interconnectivity of transportation systems, enhanced fire, police and public safety protection, recreation opportunities, and other municipal services.
8. Work with federal, state, private, and non-profit partners to create and protect resources that help municipalities stimulate economic development, community redevelopment, housing construction, and job creation.
9. Support legislation and policies that improve the ability of local governments to provide public access to their deliberations, decision-making, and records, so long as an additional source of funding is provided for any additional costs incurred.
10. Recognize the contribution of cities and towns to the history and culture of our state and a better understanding of the fact that public policy should begin and end with those unique places that are the center of community and economy in Montana.

MLCT will oppose bills that:

1. Oppose any measure that limits or diminishes municipal authority as provided by the letter and spirit of the Local Government Article of the 1972 Montana Constitution.