

# Lake County Report from the 2022 Republican Platform Committee Convention

## Summary

The Republican Party met in Billings Montana to write its Montana Republican Party (MTGOP) Platform. This resulted in the first changes to the platform since 23 June 2018.

The end result is a mixed bag of good and bad for Lake County. The **American Indian Affairs plank** (each section is considered a plank) is yet another attempt to win over tribal voters to the Republican Party through excessive pandering (the less polite phrase would be "ass kissing" and is probably more accurate). The Lake County delegation got none of the pointed improvements it sought to inject into the American Indian Affairs plank but did hold the line on some rather stupid inputs others tried to get written into the document. The end result is a plank of meaningless platitudes that are easy for us to support since they don't say anything. The bottom line is that we were not able to insert into the Indian Affairs plank recognition of the requirement for equality before the law for **all** American citizens living within the boundaries of reservations in the State of Montana, but neither were those rights excluded. The American Indian Affairs plank is a fluff piece.

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The irony of the American Indian Affairs plank is that our efforts were opposed forcefully by a delegate who is *not an Indian* and lives in a county *that has no reservation*. This follows the pattern of people who do not live on or near reservations telling those of us who do how we are supposed to act, what we're supposed to do, and that we should not make any changes in policy. Indeed, this is how I would characterize the entire MTGOP's approach to tribal affairs and Lake County in particular. The people who never have to deal with tribal issues with any regularity and certainly absent any knowledge of reality about life on the reservations embrace and hold tightly to their bosom the right to dictate how those who **do** live on reservations are supposed to act, think, and behave.

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The Lake County delegation was able to get almost everything it recommended in the **National Affairs plank**. We made numerous changes, including the opening sentence where we wrote, *"The Montana Republican Party affirms that when it comes to national affairs the federal government must put the interest of American citizens above that of non-citizens and it must support individual freedom and liberty for all citizens of the United States of America."* This was our effort to reestablish citizenship as a sought-after and valuable claim over and above the rights of non-citizens—particularly those here illegally.

We added defining marriage as between a biological man and a biological woman.

We added the following which actually met with some resistance from Bill Mercer, a distinguished and well thought of attorney currently in the Montana legislature: *"...and we demand that those being unlawfully held in indefinite detention in Washington DC for their actions on January 6th, 2021 be immediately granted just due process and released on their own recognizance pending further legal proceedings."* While Mr. Mercer rose in opposition and spoke some legalese, others lined up behind the microphone to basically tell him to shut up and sit down (politely). The motion to include our language carried overwhelmingly, and we didn't have to defend it ourselves. Others did the work.

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We also wrote the lead paragraph under State's Rights. *"The Montana Republican party recognizes as a first principle of governance that the Federal government was created by the States to execute only limited enumerated tasks, and that when they exceed the purview of those tasks, the States—each and individually—have the right to determine whether those actions are legal and binding in their respective States."*

Perhaps because this was a very long section of the platform and the delegates were sleepy by this time, we managed to sneak in another subtle but highly significant change for us living here in Lake County. A line already in the text stated, *"We oppose any extension of federal or regional bureaucratic control over water originating in Montana, including federal reserved water rights compacts, and consider any such action an infringement on Montana's constitutionally defined water rights."* We amended the sentence to read, *"We oppose any extension of federal, **tribal**, or regional bureaucratic control...water rights."* [Emphasis added here.]

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The one last addition we made came under the heading of a new paragraph entitled "Social Engineering". We wrote the following: *"We stand strongly against any government entity depositing public funds in any financial institution that uses Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) or other social engineering criteria to discriminate against the free will of individuals or businesses. We vehemently oppose the establishment and utilization of any private or governmental systems that establishes the practices and practical use of a "social credit score." We oppose surveillance stalking of American citizens who are not under any form of lawful investigation or subject to any open warrants. Lawful use of warrant-based surveillance obtained through courts as a result of reasonable probable cause may be used by law enforcement, but unrestricted*

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*monitoring of citizens movements and the storage and retaining of that data in any format constitutes "surveillance stalking" and violates and individual's right to privacy."*

We sat in on the **Election Law plank** to support Senator Manzella's effort to enhance election integrity. Four bullets were added that are rather broad, but it was established that the Montana Republican Party believes *"election integrity is paramount"*. I preferred the Senator's original language that integrity is more important than efficiency because it was explained that if efficiency becomes the dominating factor, the

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vote is surrendered to computer systems and other electronic means that push the process into the realm of technologies that only a select and educated few understand. Her point was that we must be more concerned with getting it right than making it quick and easy. We ended up in the end with *"election integrity is paramount."*

Support for maintaining the Electoral College was reaffirmed, and the Montana Republican Party stated its belief that it is *"essential to fully implement the election integrity legislation passed in the 67th Legislative session and signed by the Governor."* These election integrity improvements are being partially blocked by the judiciary.

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Under the **State Administration plank**, the MTGOP endorsed combining all elections, including but not limited to school board elections with the primary and general election cycles. Under this plank, the MTGOP once again reiterated the call for closed primaries.

Under the **Taxation plank**, the following dealing with revenue surpluses was added: *"In the event of revenue surplus, excess funds shall be returned to the Montana resident taxpayers in order to restrain government growth and allow for reduction of government."*

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### **Rule Changes**

Several rule changes were passed at the beginning of the session. Most notably, and I've been told this takes effect immediately, the election process for new Central Committee leadership was moved to between 1 August and November 1 of the odd numbered years. That means we won't be starting the election process for new officers this December and finishing in March of 2023. The current officers will be in office until the process runs its course in the late summer and fall of 2023.

### **Conclusion**

There was some good work done by patriotic conservatives at this Convention. Some very good additions were made, but no serious work was done on the American Indian Affairs plank.

The process could be much better. I signed up for three planks. When I arrived, I discovered all three committees I wanted to be on were meeting at the exact same time. The process was to rank order the planks you wanted address, so I ended up in the National Affairs plank when I probably could have done more good for Lake County fighting for our rights in the American Indian Affairs room. Still, no damage was done.

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Making a platform in two days strikes me as ridiculous. All we do is take the last platform from four years ago and tweak it a little here and there. This should be at least a six month process with serious brains working the various issues. I guess there is so much faith in what has gone before that everyone is quite happy with tweaks. Right now it is hard to convince the MTGOP of any need to change since Republicans are winning all over in Montana. There is no desire to 'rock the boat' at this time. To me the process and final product lack seriousness—especially when compared to platforms such as that of the Republicans in Texas.

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The final day where the entire body is voting on the changes is tedious and mind-numbing. However, we should know the process and know the rules so we can be ready. My recommendation, though, is that this entire process be revamped so that serious thought goes into each plank and we end up with specifics and not platitudes.

I will note that one elected representative told me that he didn't care about the platform. He said he was in a safe seat, has won many times and will win again, and he might or might not follow the platform. He did not feel the least bit bound to it, and what would or could the MTGOP do if he didn't follow it? He would be elected again regardless. I do not believe any attempts to make the platform more binding—and some were made at this convention and will come out in the final document—can trump that representative's sentiment. The voters in his safe seat will put him back in the legislature no matter what, and the MTGOP be damned.

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Hard to argue with that.