

## The Desperation of Democrats

In the middle of a primary election, establishment Democrats are endorsing Billings stock market advisor and asset manager Gary Buchanan for Montana's eastern Congressional District. Furthermore, many rank-and-file Democrats in the district's cities are helping to circulate a petition to put Buchanan on the November ballot as an Independent candidate.

Buchanan has carefully crafted his independent political brand for decades as a way to build his business, Buchanan Capital, Inc. It may be the main reason his business is so successful. But the other reason is that in his business relationships he only talks to (and more importantly only listens to) rich people, an exclusive constituency who already have money to invest.

Buchanan's politics, as his business, actually have little to do with working-class Montanans—the vast majority of Montanans who don't have discretionary funding to invest in a stock portfolio. Except of course if he believes, as all Republicans still do, that trickle-down economics actually works for workers.

Moreover, these very same Democrats don't know with whom Buchanan will caucus if he is elected. If he does not caucus with one party or the other he'll be even less effective for Montana than Matt Rosendale is, a pretty low bar. Do they really think that Buchanan will caucus with the Democrats, who face a steep climb to hold onto their congressional majority this November? If so, why don't they say so?

The Democrats' campaign for Buchanan reeks of neoliberal desperation especially when there are good candidates running in the Democratic primary in June. And you can understand why. The Democratic Party is completely frozen out of power at the state level. And Senator Tester continues to tack to the right to appeal to more conservative voters far ahead of his 2024 re-election campaign. Nancy Keenan's decade-long stewardship, if you can call it that, of the state Party finally caught up with corporate Democrats in 2020. Democratic desperation certainly is no guarantee that struggling rural voters will vote for Buchanan.

This desperation is especially rich since these very same Democrats castigated Bernie Sanders and his supporters during his runs for President (in which he handily won Montana's 2016 democratic primary) for not actually being a registered Democrat!

Instead of desperate acts, wouldn't it be better for the Montana Democratic Party (and their consultants) to examine why they've failed to address their problems in these two areas?

- **Working-Class Messaging:** The first and lasting impression candidates need to make with voters in Montana is that they are working to represent working-class-centered interests—whether the workers are organized or not—above all else. Populist authenticity matters more than anything in seeking representation. Pat Williams understood this well, the last time Montana was considered a “blue” state.

- Community Organizing: Authentic messaging means nothing unless you listen to all voters by having face-to-face relationship-building conversations with them—as the Amazon Labor Union did with all workers at Amazon’s Staten Island warehouse—in the long period between general elections. Of course, candidates running from behind can’t do that. But a real democratic working-class-centered party can. Deep organizing—building a statewide political community organization funded by and accountable to its working-class members, and not political consultants working for corporate and wealthy donors—can deliver results at election time and throughout every legislative session to build durable working-class power. Spend your money on deep organizing among voters instead of consultants whose message no one will hear.

Unlike in Buchanan’s private business, the role of democratic government is to increase public wealth—as measured by public health, public infrastructure, public housing, public education, and other public goods required for every Montanan to lead the fullest life possible—not privileging the private wealth of already or aspiring rich people. The Democratic Party would do themselves and Montanans the most good by taking a firm stand on the side of the working class, to once again become the “party of the people.”

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