

SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT

The Facts About Brad Barker's Legislative Record

Carbon County, Montana

The Montana Freedom Caucus (MFC), Americans for Prosperity (AFP), and Accountability in State Government are waging a coordinated disinformation campaign against Representative Brad Barker – amplified locally by Cynthia Marble, the Seymours, Ed Halland, and the Hormans.

Brad Barker voted with Republicans 88% of the time in 2025. He votes against bills that contain unconstitutional or poorly written language – even on issues he personally supports. Unconstitutional or poorly written bills cost taxpayers money. Brad always put his constituents - and Montana taxpayers - first.

MONTANA FREEDOM CAUCUS — CLAIM BY CLAIM

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad Barker voted for a Driver's Privilege Card for illegal aliens.

THE TRUTH:

Blatantly false. House Bill 275 required proof of Montana residence AND lawful presence in the United States. There was no provision for illegal aliens.

HB 275 was championed on the House floor by Freedom Caucus member Representative Tracy Sharp. Matt Regier and the MFC aren't attacking Sharp.

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad voted against SB 164, which prohibited sex changes on minors.

THE TRUTH:

There were multiple competing bills on this issue. Brad voted FOR HB 862, which he believed was the stronger, better-drafted bill. He voted to protect women's sports, protect women in private spaces, and stop gender transitions in minors.

Claiming Brad does not protect children is slander. Period.

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad helped Democrats pass HB2, increasing the state budget by 17%.

THE TRUTH:

HB 2 is the Republican budget, signed by Governor Gianforte. It covers approximately 87% of all state spending. **Actual spending increased by less than half a percent per year.**

While the MFC attacks Brad for the budget, their own members were voting to spend far more:

- MFC member Matt Regier voted to override Governor vetoes and add over \$168 million in spending over the next four years.
- MFC member Barry Usher voted to override Governor vetoes and add over \$209 million in spending over the next four years.

The Freedom Caucus lectures others about spending while voting to blow past the Governor's vetoes by hundreds of millions of dollars.

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad voted for a cultural grant bill (HB9) that funded drag performances and promoted the LGBTQ agenda.

THE TRUTH:

HB 9 is a routine cultural projects bill passed every session. In House District 55, it granted approximately \$20,000 each to three local organizations:

- Carbon County Arts Guild & Depot Gallery
- Carbon County Historical Society
- Red Lodge Area Community Foundation

This bill has nothing to do with LGBTQ issues. **Smearing these local institutions to score political points is dishonest and shameful.**

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad voted to increase legislators' pay by 33% (HB13).

THE TRUTH:

HB 13 set legislative pay at \$22/hour, effective 2027. Montana's citizen legislature receives no salary. Legislators are paid only during the 90-day session in odd years and for committee meetings.

Meanwhile, here is what Matt Regier was actually doing with taxpayer money:

- After his father, former Senator Keith Regier, termed out of office, they created a taxpayer-funded position for him at \$45/hour.
- After Representative Rhonda Knudsen lost her Senate race, Matt created a taxpayer-funded position for her at \$42.63/hour.

Losing an election or being term-limited should not be rewarded with a double-pay government position. *That is the real taxpayer abuse.*

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad voted to let a transgender legislator use the women's restroom.

THE TRUTH:

This is a political distortion. The 2025 rules vote was a Freedom Caucus media stunt – an attempt to insert bathroom policy into parliamentary procedure to generate press coverage, not to keep anyone safe. This stunt distracted lawmakers from focusing on things that actually impact Montanans, all for some media attention.

Brad voted for HB 121, which protects women in restrooms, changing rooms, and sleeping quarters across Montana. HB 121 is real, enforceable protection, not a media stunt.

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad voted AGAINST exempting Social Security from state income taxes (HB148).

THE TRUTH:

Montanans who receive only Social Security income were already paying zero state income tax before 2025. Montana follows federal exemption law. Social Security income is not taxed. HB 148 would have changed nothing for the overwhelming majority of retirees. This claim is either ignorant or deliberately misleading.

THEIR CLAIM:

Brad voted to create a slush fund instead of returning money to taxpayers (HB924).

THE TRUTH:

HB 924 created the Growth and Opportunity (GO) Trust — a fiscally responsible mechanism to set aside volatile surplus revenue for:

- Local disaster resiliency programs
- Property tax relief for primary residences
- Water development and bridge infrastructure
- Early childhood programs
- Shoring up pension liabilities

Only the interest – not the principal – can be spent. Setting aside surplus in good years protects taxpayers when revenues fall and prevents passing debt to the next generation.

The MFC's alternative: send rebate checks timed to election cycles. In 2023, they wanted checks before the 2024 election instead of paying down state debt. In 2025, they wanted checks before the 2026 election instead of fixing pension liabilities. ***That is not fiscal conservatism. It's an attempt to buy votes.***

AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY — FOLLOW THE MONEY

AFP admits it works for out-of-state corporate donors – not for Montana families.

THEIR CLAIM:

Montana has 'MASSIVE DEFICITS.'

THE TRUTH:

The Montana Constitution prohibits deficit spending. This is not an opinion. It is the law. Montana cannot legally run a deficit. **AFP's claim is flatly false.**

THEIR CLAIM:

HB 231 gave cities a blank check to spend more money.

THE TRUTH:

HB 231 created Homestead Tax exemptions for Montana homeowners. It has nothing to do with city spending. **AFP opposed HB 231 and told us why in plain terms: the bill benefits Montana residents rather than non-resident property owners.**

Here is what HB 231 actually delivers for Carbon County property owners:

- Tax Year 2025: Owner-occupied homes saw an average 7.5% property tax decrease.
- Tax Year 2026: Qualified homesteads get another ~17% decrease. Long-term rentals see a 30% decrease. Farms and ranches see ~10% decrease. Small businesses see ~17.5% decrease.

AFP fought against a bill that saved Carbon County homeowners money. Ask yourself who they are really working for.

WHAT BRAD BARKER HAS ACTUALLY DELIVERED

While the MFC spends its time manufacturing attacks, Brad Barker has been working for Carbon County.

	Property Tax Reform: Prioritizes Montana residents – lowered taxes for 80% of Montana homeowners, with an effective tax reduction for over 97% of Montanans.
	Income Tax Cuts: Simplified the tax code to a two-rate structure of 4.7% and 5.4%, instead of a multi-bracket system with a 6.9% top rate.
	Small Business Relief: Raised the business equipment tax exemption from \$300,000 to \$1 million providing direct relief for small businesses, farmers, and ranchers.
	Spending Discipline: Kept state spending growth below half a percent a year – far below inflation and among the lowest in the country. That is what conservative governance looks like.
	Expanding Opportunity: Expanded vocational training, creating educational pathways for students who are not college-bound, including skilled trades and local career opportunities.
	Smarter School Spending: Incentivized rural school resource sharing to reduce overhead and prioritize student outcomes – better value for every taxpayer dollar.
	Rural Healthcare: Protected rural hospitals and healthcare infrastructure that Carbon County families depend on.
	Energy & Permitting: Strengthened energy policy and cut permitting red tape for reliable, affordable power.
	Water Rights: Protected Montana water rights by protecting local adjudication.
	Infrastructure & Pensions: Set aside funds to backstop pension liabilities and maintain bridges, improve water storage, and repair schools – <i>instead of passing crumbling infrastructure and debt to our kids.</i>
	Government Transparency: Required local government entities and schools to publish their agendas before meetings and post recordings within 5 business days – so Montanans can hold their officials accountable.
	Early Literacy: Developed the state's targeted early literacy program to confront a crisis: fewer than half of 3rd through 8th graders are reading at grade-level proficiency.