



Corey Stapleton  
MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE

state of the  
**SECRETARY OF STATE**

**2017**

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## A LETTER FROM SECRETARY STAPLETON

**W**elcome to the first annual State of the Secretary of State, a review of the significant activities and accomplishments of Montana's constitutional Office of the Secretary of State. We have been busy!

I was elected in November of 2016 and assumed office January 2nd, 2017. The office employs 40 staff and occupies two buildings in Helena, Montana, with the main office located on the second floor of the State Capitol Building.

We hope you will find our report informative and inspirational as we strive to become the best-run agency in state government, and provide immaculate customer service in everything we do.

**The mission of  
the office of the  
Secretary of State  
is to promote  
democracy,  
help commerce  
thrive, and  
record history  
for future  
generations.**



Corey Stapleton



Creating a pro-business climate in Montana to help commerce thrive inspires us to create the same climate in our office. Finding efficiencies, creating intentional strategy and vision, holding ourselves accountable, hiring and retaining the best and brightest employees, investing in our infrastructure and people, is how we have done this. In January 2017, we created our strategic plan to become the best run agency in government and provide immaculate service in everything we do. Our approach focused on the people we serve. We started measuring our performance because if it isn't measured, it's difficult to manage and improve. Performance plans were created for every employee in each division. We are providing better service and spending less money. We have consolidated from three locations to two, resulting in savings of \$50,000 annually. In calendar year 2017 we spent \$50,000 less than the prior year. While finding efficiencies and saving money, the agency revenue has increased, which means more business activity in the state is occurring.

***"We are providing better service and spending less money."***



## A REPORT FROM BUSINESS SERVICES

### Vision of the Business Services Division

Exceed the expectations of our customers by providing immaculate service and intense clarity in every transaction.

### Mission of the Business Services Division

To enable Montana commerce by providing accurate information, timely review, and secure filings.

“  
**Customers spent  
nearly 43 hours  
less time waiting  
on hold in a day  
than they did a  
year earlier.**  
”

### A year of major improvement

In January of 2017, Business Services Division set out to improve the customer experience. As reflected in the chart below, customers were spending as much as 43 hours a day, collectively, waiting on the phone to be helped. Over the past year, we have improved the customer experience by reducing the call wait time. Calls are now answered in less than a minute.

So how did we do this? The most obvious answer would be to add more staff, but the fact is we have done the exact opposite. Through attrition and cross training, we are doing more with less. Instead of routing our calls through an automated confusing system, we have simplified the process to allow the customers direct access to our staff.

Additionally, in September of 2017, Secretary Stapleton took this office into the 21st century and removed the paper option for filing by going digital. Previously, customers were penalized for filing incorrectly by being charged additional fees and delays in the processing time. Going digital results in faster, mobile friendly and error free filing, with no additional fees. The time to file a document is down from 5-10 days to 1 or less. The Business Services Division staff are dedicated public servants who are actively engaged and love to help our customers.

### CUSTOMER'S TIME SPENT WAITING ON THE PHONE

Day	CALLS ANSWERED		TOTAL ANSWER DELAY		AVG. ANSWER DELAY		MAX. ANSWER DELAY	
	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
11/29-11/28	254	217	43 hours	1.6 hours	10 min	28 sec	48 min	5.5 min
11/30-11/29	245	254	23 hours	2 hours	7.5 min	30 sec	20 min	5 min
12/01-11/30	208	249	16 hours	2 hours	5 min	30 sec	23 min	5 min
12/02-12/01	164	185	15 hours	.5 hours	5.6 min	12 sec	24 min	2 min



## BUSINESS SERVICES GOING DIGITAL



SEARCH



CLICK



PAY

On the day Secretary Stapleton and his executive staff took office, there was a failing information technology (IT) environment in the office. Customer wait times on the telephone were nearly two hours for Business Services Division customers.

Since July of 2009, the previous Secretary of State's administration had been unsuccessful in managing and implementing needed changes to the computer system (SIMS) which serves the 160,000 businesses registering annually with the office. Vendor relations were frayed, staff morale was low, error-rates were high, and the Office of the Secretary of State was hemorrhaging cash.

Secretary Stapleton, who has previously served on

information technology boards overseeing all three branches of government (while serving in the Montana state senate), took immediate action and reversed the direction of Business Services Division. On September 1, 2017, the office went fully 'digital' for online business filings. This was a major initiative. Montana is now a national leader in providing the way governments interact and serve business customers!

As Montana's Business Officer, Secretary Stapleton is committed to giving the highest support for the small businesses which form the backbone of Montana's economy. In order for us to help commerce thrive, we must always remember that our purpose isn't to serve ourselves, but the citizens and businesses who create jobs and capital.

## PAVING THE WAY IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Secretary of State IT Division provides technical support to all staff within the agency. It also manages 21 databases, several applications and services available to the public, business partners and county election administrators.



### BUSINESS SERVICES

In 2017, we have streamlined our online business filing system by going digital and making it faster, mobile, and error free for Montana's 160,000+ business owners.



### ELECTION & VOTER SERVICES

We have made continuous updates to our My Voter Page, election night reporting, the canvass, candidate filings, and the statewide elections management system (MT votes).

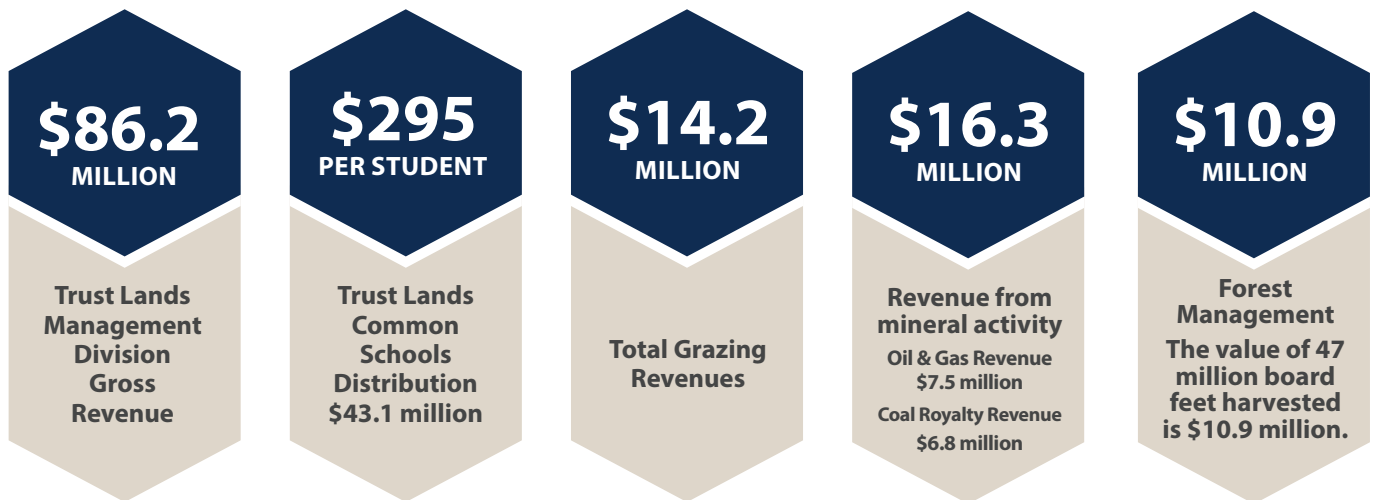


### ADMINISTRATIVE RULES OF MONTANA (ARM)

We decided to make do with our current ARM system, resulting in a budget savings of \$700,000.

# MONTANA LAND BOARD

Secretary of State Corey Stapleton is an active member of our Montana Land Board, which helps our schools and economy by managing public lands to generate revenue. We have brought our pro-growth, pro-job, pro-family values to the board and work hard to make sure the voices of Montanans are heard at each meeting.





## THINGS THAT MATTER OUTREACH TOUR

We are committed to our customers. Whether it's the 160,000 businesses our office serves or the 650,000 Montana voters we oversee, delivering immaculate service to those customers means the Office of the Secretary of State needs to be present throughout Montana. Secretary Stapleton has developed a unique outreach program where he spends two days in each of Montana's 56 county seats, collaborating county election administrators, Chambers of Commerce, touring local businesses, and speaking to high school students about government and citizenship. This outreach tour has been incredibly well received! We call it "Things that Matter".

In 2017, the following counties were visited on the Things that Matter outreach tours: Cascade, Daniels, Park, Custer, Mineral, Hill, Beaverhead, Chouteau, Wheatland, Lincoln, and Fallon.

Each time Secretary Stapleton travels to a new Montana county, he is accompanied by a different staff member. Many state employees have worked at the Office of the Secretary of State for years, even decades, yet have never experienced work outside their own division or traveled outside of the State Capitol for work.

The communities we have visited have been grateful, and the employees who have accompanied and worked on Things that Matter have been inspired about the greater mission of our office. In fact, of all our 2017 initiatives, Things that Matter has been the one initiative that incorporates all five of our agency's pillars (goals): Create employee engagement, Impact through outreach, Inform and educate, Ensure continuous improvement, and Build meaningful influence.

We are looking forward to Things that Matter in 2018 and beyond!



Secretary Stapleton visiting the Clerk and Recorder's Office in Lincoln County



RY Timber in Livingston, Montana



Secretary Stapleton and staff members Della Dobbins and Alisa Cottrill at the Libby Dam

**In 2017 on the Things That Matter outreach tour, Secretary Stapleton traveled 5,049 miles, logging 80 hours and 18 minutes of windshield time, and 16 1/2 working days in counties. Some of the most valuable stops are trips to the high schools talking with future leaders, collaborating with the clerks, meeting business owners, and having discussions at a community round table. Secretary Stapleton said, "I love learning about the things that matter to Montana's communities."**



## MILESTONES IN ELECTIONS

The Montana Secretary of State is the Chief Elections Officer for Montana and is responsible for interpreting state election laws under Title 13 and ensuring that they are implemented by county election officials uniformly throughout the state.

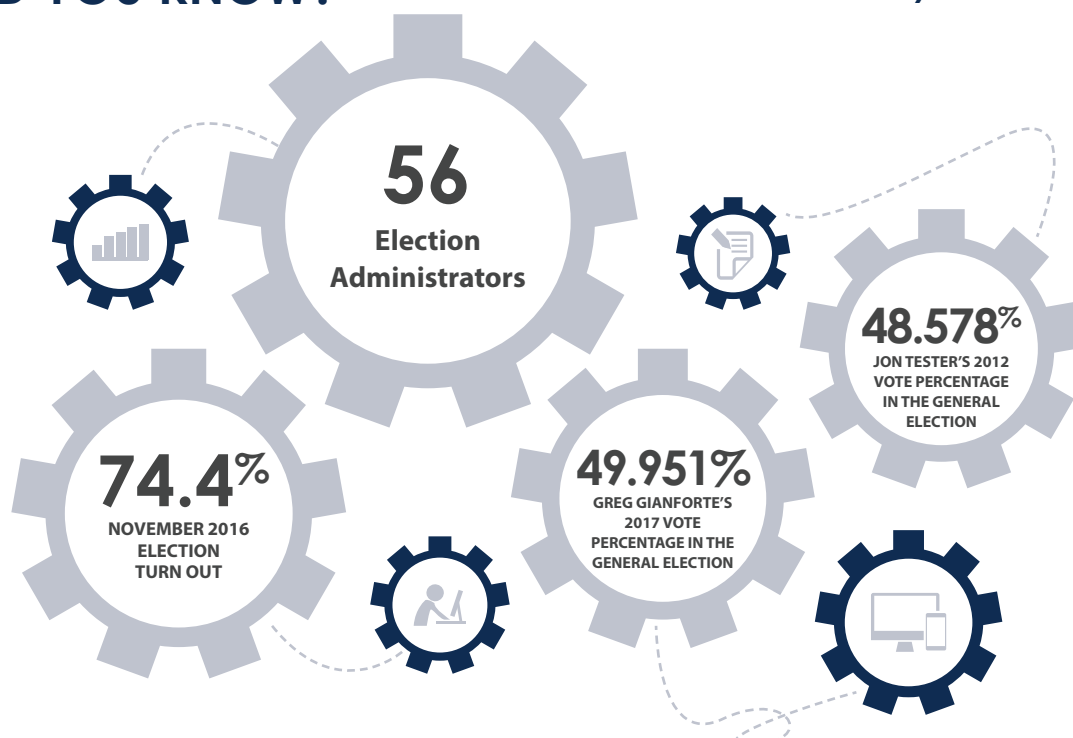
The Elections Division is a highly engaged team that provides immaculate service when assisting both election administrators and the general public on voter registration and elections issues. They focus on being able to listen and understand what is being asked and deliver what is expected by our customers.

Montana voting systems are rooted in technology that is never at rest, and as a result, the Elections Division is continually improving and revising processes and procedures for hardware interfaces, voting systems, training manuals, and various other technical documents, directives, and advisories.

We certify equipment used in voting, and in September this office conducted another certification event for Election Systems and Software, (ES&S). ES&S certified the EVS 5.2.2.0 software and proved compatibility across the systems already presently certified in Montana.

The May 25th special election gave our office an extra opportunity to showcase the Election Night Reporting (ENR) system. The system, [mtelectionresults.gov](http://mtelectionresults.gov), provides up to the minute statewide results from each of the 56 counties for any federal, primary or general election.

### DID YOU KNOW? *In Montana every vote matters!*



## 2017 MAIL BALLOT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Following the May 25th, 2017 special congressional election in Montana, the Office of the Secretary of State was notified that two victims of voter fraud had come forward and had asked for assistance. In both cases, the victim's mail ballot had been taken by an unauthorized person, voted, signed, and mailed back to a local election administrator.

There was considerable inconsistency in the manner these two separate cases were handled by local law enforcement and election officials. Additionally, the Commissioner of Political Practices, whose office has jurisdiction over voter misconduct and fraud, was never notified in either case. Concerned that additional voters may have been victims of voter misconduct without knowing their ballot had been compromised, Secretary Stapleton asked for a top-down review of Montana's mail ballot system. In August, the Office of the Secretary of State in conjunction with the 56 county Election Administrators, began conducting a Survey of the uncounted ballots from the special election. The goal of the Survey was to better understand why so many ballots had been unsigned, mailed too late, or signed by someone other than the voter. It was also to provide a foundation for making informed recommendations of improvement. (Our challenge: how do we maintain systemic election integrity when thousands of mailed ballots leave the custody of election officials for up to thirty days?)

In the May statewide special election, 1,833 mail ballots had been voted but not counted. This number of uncounted ballots was considerably larger than the 1,158 ballots which had not counted in the previous statewide election just six months prior (November 2016).

All 1,833 voters whose ballot did not count were attempted to be contacted by either their local county administrator or by the Secretary of State's office. The results of the 2017 Mail Ballot Improvement Project can be found at [www.sos.mt.gov/elections](http://www.sos.mt.gov/elections).

Of particular importance were the 363 mail ballots that had

'mismatched' or illegal signatures on them. Of these, 38 were confirmed to be family member signatures. Many of those family members, upon being contacted during the Survey, acknowledged they had intentionally signed another family member's ballot. This is against current Montana statute.

Upon completion of the Survey in December, analyses supports there does not appear to be widespread, coordinated, or geographical clustering of mismatched signatures during the 2017 Montana special election. At the time of this report, while there are still active law enforcement investigations into voter fraud being conducted, the context of these fraud cases is that they are unrelated with each other and represent a small fraction of the 383,000 votes cast in the May election. Still, we have much room for improvement. A working group was formed around the 2017 Mail Ballot Improvement Project, and met for several hours on December 5, 2017. Numerous recommendations resulted from the completed Survey. Since the goal of the 2017 Mail Ballot Improvement Project is to reduce the number of uncounted ballots in future statewide elections, there is real opportunity to showcase these improvements during the 2018 statewide elections.

There was consensus amongst the working group for these improvements: Better training of ballot signature verification for election administrators, public awareness through public service announcements regarding mail ballot rules and laws, design simplification of ballot envelopes to reduce potential confusion, and better communications between the Election Administrators, the Office of the Secretary of State, and the Commissioner of Political Practices.

All in all, the 2017 Mail Ballot Improvement Project was insightful and critical in better understanding Montana's voting system. Stay tuned for future developments and continuous improvements as we strive to increase both the number of ballots being counted and the integrity of our overall statewide elections.

## MONTANA NOTARY

Montana's Notary Division has built meaningful influence as a national leader. Colorado, which has emerged as our Sister-Office, and Montana worked closely to avoid the pitfalls experienced when we created our own remote notarization bill. Our team helped Colorado reach a consensus. Colorado established a working group and reached a compromise to provide immaculate services in the Centennial State. Our team worked with the State of Texas Notary Division to implement Administrative Rules and also helped them plan and design their first state-wide Notary Conference.

As we've worked to help other states, Montana remains the only state to enact remote notarization for both electronic and tangible documents. This shows we continue to lead the way in helping commerce thrive. Montana is also taking the lead to ensure— state and national standards are in place to ensure that remote electronic notarization of tangible documents is available for all Montanans and Americans. We stand behind our mission to promote democracy and record history for future generations.



**April 19-20, 2018  
Butte, Montana**



The 2018 Montana Notary Conference will give Montana's notaries public all the tools they need to take their notary skills to the peak of performance. Secretary of State Corey Stapleton is pleased to continue the tradition of offering the most comprehensive and practical notary education available in the country! This is a unique opportunity for notaries to learn more about the duties and responsibilities of the office.





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2017



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