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ELECTIONS

Montana GOP's Power Struggle: A Disregard For Law And Republican Voters

Doug Bohn November 21, 2023 2 Comments



The republican/GOP headquarters office along 1st Street in Havre, Montana, with a grain elevator in the background

Image by Tony Webster

The recent clash for control within the Republican Party unfolded prominently on the Capitol stage in Washington D.C., yet its reverberations extend far beyond the Beltway. This tug-of-war between the seasoned Old-Guard and the passionately dedicated adherents of the populist movement is surfacing at every corner of America.

Here in Montana, the battleground extends across various Republican Central Committees (RCCs) and the Montana Grand Old Party (MTGOP). For the uninitiated, a Central Committee serves as the people's direct link to their affiliated political party, with representation organized by precinct in Montana. The precinct representative elections occur biennially, where individuals elect one male and one female to represent each precinct. These representatives, in turn, select officers to represent them at the state level within the MTGOP.

A paradigm shift, partly catalyzed by the Precinct Strategy at www.precinctstrategy.com, has enlightened the populace about their potential influence in shaping the trajectory of their political party—a strategy long employed by Democrats but not as extensively embraced by Republicans. The aftermath of the 2020 presidential election spurred many individuals to action, prompting them to vie for positions within the Republican Central Committees.

The majority of these newfound precinct participants align themselves staunchly with "America First" or "MAGA" ideologies, a conspicuous trend that hasn't escaped the notice of GOP leaders, who perceive this movement as a challenge to their established dominance.

In a strategic move in mid-2022, the MTGOP responded to this grassroots surge by instituting a novel rule, breaking with decades-old tradition upheld by the RCCs in Montana. The tradition, rooted in compliance with state law, mandated the holding of leadership elections (conventions) in the spring of odd-numbered years. Without much fanfare, the MTGOP shifted these conventions from spring to fall, citing a rationale of "weather-related" concerns for the rule change.

Additionally, MTGOP leaders, amidst a Republican super-majority legislative session, introduced Senate Bill 503, aiming to strip all powers vested in RCCs, reducing them to mere social clubs. Fortunately, SB 503 met its demise, along with similar bills in AZ and SD—a revelation confirmed by this writer, with the possibility of more states following suit.

In the scorching summer of 2022, the MTGOP ventured into murky waters with a rule change regarding RCC leadership election

conventions. Unveiling a breach of Montana State Law, MCA 13-38-205, which reads: "*1) The committee shall meet prior to the state convention of its political party and organize by electing a presiding officer and one or more vice presiding officers.*" explicitly mandating pre-state convention county committee organization, the MTGOP's move to hold RCC conventions post-state convention clashed with legal stipulations.

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Upon my notification to the MTGOP about this transgression in March 2023, their response featured an anonymous "legal opinion" asserting the law applied solely to the State Committee, absolving the RCCs of violation. However, such reasoning contradicted the fundamental purpose of the state convention—electing new leadership, a fact seemingly lost on the MTGOP.

Despite the glaring misinterpretation, the MTGOP stood firm, even as SB-322, ratified by the 2023 legislature, clarified the law a month prior to their Missoula convention. Ignoring the legislative correction, the MTGOP adhered to their "Rules trump Laws" mantra, compromising the convention's legality as per the clarified law.

This obstinate stance disenfranchised every Republican voter, stifling their voice in selecting MTGOP leadership. The MTGOP's audacious claim that their rule superseded state law betrayed the democratic process, ensuring the 2021 leadership would helm the party into the critical 2024 election cycle.

In a move that echoes political drama, the Montana GOP (MTGOP) has adopted a rule blatantly flouting state law, asserting its superiority over the legal framework. This audacious maneuver, claiming to enhance party rules, effectively disenfranchises every Republican voter in the state, stifling their voices in the crucial selection of MTGOP leadership.

Local politics, often hailed as the epitome of democratic representation, took a disheartening turn in Ravalli County in 2023. Here, a series of maneuvers, from intimidation to outright defiance of rules and laws, unfolded. The illegitimate MTGOP leadership's treatment of the Republican Central Committees (RCCs) in Montana, who stand firmly on the law, reeks of disdain bordering on tyranny.

Ravalli County was not alone in facing such treatment. Missoula County offered a prelude to the unfolding saga, witnessing the revocation of credentials for the county's RCC at an illegitimate convention. The subsequent challenge, brought forth through Robert's Rules of Order, resulted in the removal of the Missoula leadership. However, post-convention, the MTGOP chair arbitrarily overruled this decision, plunging the Missoula RCC into chaos, leading to the resignation of its entire legacy Executive Board.

A stark anomaly in Montana's political landscape, the MTGOP's violation of state law regarding county convention schedules remains curiously unscrutinized by the broader press. Instead, a Ravalli County article, while neglecting the party's transgressions, falsely portrays a "splinter faction" as merely the legacy Executive Board abandoning their posts due to loss of control.

Challenges to the truth persist, with baseless claims that only Mr. Nelson, the legacy chair of the Ravalli County RCC, could preside over a convention. Such rules, non-existent in both MTGOP bylaws and state law, underscore a power struggle driven by the pursuit of control, money, and influence.

This battle for supremacy, echoing across numerous Red states, and even within the U.S. House of Representatives, underscores a larger clash: the ascendancy of the America First movement. The crucial question emerges—will the voice of the people resonate in leadership decisions, or will power-hungry factions prevail, risking the very continuity of our Republic?

Amidst this political turbulence, an urgent call to action resounds. Citizens are implored to engage with their county RCC chairmen, shedding light on the subversion of democratic processes. A plea to contact Don Kalshmidt, Chair of the MTGOP, emphasizes the gravity of the situation. The future of counties, states, and the nation hangs in the balance, demanding active involvement beyond the ballot box.

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Author



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Doug Bohn lives in the Bitterroot Valley of Montana. He has been a resource-based community activist since Agenda 21 was only a conspiracy theory. His efforts were key in preserving Montanan's rights by stopping six wilderness bills in the 80s & 90s working alongside US Senator Conrad Burns. As an America First patriot, he dedicates his talents to the Ravalli County Republican Central Committee.

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Brad Tschida

Guest 1 month ago

Great piece Doug.

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David Rowell

Guest 1 month ago

Well written, Doug! As a precinct captain in Missoula County, I can say we will not back down. We are moving forward to represent Missoula County Republicans who are ready to take back the power of America's founding- We, the people!

Last edited 1 month ago by David Rowell

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