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[Home](#) > [About-the-Legislature](#) >

[Print](#)  
[Version](#)

- [Home](#)
- [Bills](#)
- [Session](#)
- [Interim](#)
- [Committees](#)
- [Legislators](#)
- [Watch & Listen](#)
- [Reference Center](#)
- [Laws and Constitution](#)
- [Engage in Government](#)
- [About the Legislature](#)
- [A to Z Index](#)
- [Contact Us](#)

## Highlights from Legislative History

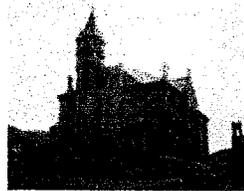
### 1889

#### First State Constitution

In a special election Oct. 1, Montanans overwhelmingly adopt a state constitution and elect state officials, including 66 state legislators.

#### Statehood

On Nov. 8, Montana becomes the 41st state, with 16 original counties.



#### First Session Stalemate

1st State Legislature convenes Nov. 23 at the Lewis & Clark County Courthouse (pictured) amid heated partisan charges of voting irregularities in Silver Bow County. Democrats and

Republicans each seat separate delegations from Silver Bow in separate Houses of Representatives.

Due to the partisan conflict, 1st Legislature adjourns Feb. 20, 1890, with nothing to show for its efforts. The 2 Houses pass separate sets of bills, but a deadlocked Senate (8 Democrats, 8 Republicans) passes none of them.

### 1893



#### State Seal & Motto

3rd Legislature officially adopts a state seal with the motto "Oro y Plata," Spanish for "Gold and Silver." The design is almost identical to the seal adopted by the territorial government in 1865.

**1894**

**Helena Becomes Capital**

Montanans vote Nov. 6 to name the permanent capital for state government. Helena receives 51.8% of the vote, just edging out Anaconda.

**1895**



**First State Symbol**

4th Legislature passes a law creating the first state symbol: the bitterroot becomes the state flower. The Legislature goes on to adopt several other state symbols over the years, including the western meadowlark as the state bird (1931), the ponderosa pine as the state tree (1949), the blackspotted cutthroat trout as the state fish (1977). and the grizzly bear as the state animal (1983).

**Building a Capitol**

Legislators appoint a Capitol Commission, chaired by the governor, to secure plans for a statehouse of "highest degree of architectural beauty and constructive excellence."

**1897**

**Minority Party Power**

5th Legislature convenes Jan. 4, with 50 Democrats, 20 Republicans, and 21 Populists - the most politically divided session in the history of the state. Minority parties are represented in every session 1893-1905 and many sessions thereafter.

**Corruption Exposed**

Newly elected Rep. Fred Whiteside, a Democrat from Flathead County, exposes graft among members of the Capitol Commission.

**1899**



**Vote Buying**

"Copper King" William A. Clark of Butte successfully bribes members of the 6th Legislature to get their nod to represent Montana in the U.S. Senate. His minions toss thousands of dollars over the transoms of legislators' hotel rooms. Fred Whiteside (pictured), now a state senator, exposes the crime in a dramatic moment

on the Senate floor.

The corruption surrounding election of U.S. senators in Montana helps spur ratification in 1913 of the 17th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, providing for direct election of U.S. senators by voters, not legislators.

## 1902



### Capitol Dedication

The new Capitol in Helena is officially dedicated with great fanfare at a ceremony July 4. The final cost of the building, including furnishings and landscaping, is about \$540,000.

## 1903

### Copper Collar

8th Legislature meets in special session Dec. 1-11 to respond to a devastating shutdown of all statewide operations by the Amalgamated Copper Company. The Company puts 11,000 workers out of work in a successful attempt to force legislators to pass a "fair trial" law, allowing disqualification of judges from court cases for prejudice. The measure becomes the first of its kind in the nation.

## 1905

### Initiative & Referendum

9th Legislature proposes a constitutional amendment to allow Montanans to bypass the Legislature and adopt or repeal state law through initiative or referendum. The proposal is overwhelmingly approved by voters the following year.

### Primary Elections

The Legislature passes a law creating primary elections and allowing for the nomination of candidates by popular vote at primary elections.



### State Flag

Lawmakers establish a state flag of Montana. It features the state seal on a dark blue background. In 1981, the 47th Legislature adds the word "MONTANA" to help differentiate the flag from those of other states.



### **Meagher Statue**

The Legislature authorizes placement on the north lawn of the Capitol of a bronze statue of Thomas Francis Meagher (pronounced *mahr*), a Civil War veteran who twice served as acting governor of Montana Territory.

## **1913**

### **Women's Vote**

13th Legislature passes a law giving Montanans the opportunity to ratify a U.S. constitutional amendment extending to women the right to vote. Voters approve the measure by 52.2% at the 1914 general election.

## **1915**

### **County Busting**

14th Legislature passes the Leighton Act, allowing counties to split or subdivide as they see fit. The result: Montana gains 20 new counties in the next decade. This increases the political power of rural counties as each new county gains a new senator.

## **1917**

### **First Women**



The first two women elected to the state Legislature take their seats Jan. 8 in the House: Maggie Smith Hathaway (left), a Democrat from Stevensville; and



Emma Ingalls (right), a Republican from Kalispell.

## **1918**

### **Sedition Act**

During patriotic hysteria surrounding World War I, a special session of the 15th Legislature passes the toughest sedition law in the nation. Aimed at stifling criticism of the war effort, the law becomes a model for the federal Sedition Law of May 1918.

## **1923**

### **Old-Age Pensions**

18th Legislature passes an Old-Age Pension Act, setting a

national precedent for care of elderly citizens. The action precedes creation of the federal Social Security system by 12 years.

### 1933



#### **First Native American**

Rep. Dolly Smith Cusker Akers, a Democrat from Poplar, becomes the first known American Indian to serve in the Montana Legislature.

### 1957

#### **Legislative Council**

35th Legislature creates a Legislative Council to direct research during the interims between sessions. The Council also quickly assumes bill-drafting duties, reducing heavy reliance on lobbyists.

### 1963

#### **Open Meetings**

38th Legislature passes a law requiring all public agencies to allow the public to attend their meetings.

### 1965

#### **One Man, One Vote**

After the U.S. Supreme Court upholds the principle of "one man, one vote," Montana is forced to reapportion its senate districts by population. Previously every county was allowed to have one senator. This "frees Montana Legislature from the constitutional hammerlock of rural domination that had been created in the constitutional convention of 1889."

### 1967

#### **Legislative Auditor's Office**

40th Legislature creates the Legislative Auditor's Office to investigate how state agencies spend the money appropriated to them by legislators.

### 1971

**Voting Age**

42nd Legislature passes a law lowering the voting age to 18. The stipulation is incorporated into the 1972 state Constitution.

**1972****Constitutional Convention**

Montana holds a Constitutional Convention to significantly revise and reform the state constitution.

Among other things, the new constitution:

- Limits the size of the Legislature to 40-50 senators and 80-100 representatives.
- Ends the practice of the lieutenant governor presiding over the state Senate.
- Establishes a bipartisan citizen commission to reapportion legislative districts.
- Calls for 60-day annual sessions instead of the biennial sessions that have been tradition since statehood.
- Requires all meetings of the Legislature and its committees to be open to the public.

Montanans approve the new constitution at a June 6 election.

**1973-74****Annual Sessions**

For the first and only time in its history, the Montana Legislature meets in annual sessions, as provided for in the 1972 state constitution. But opponents of annual sessions propose a constitutional initiative to return the Legislature to 90-day biennial sessions.

Montana voters approve biennial sessions by a slim margin at the Nov. 1974 election.

**1975****State Laws Updated**

44th Legislature creates the office of Code Commissioner to supervise the recodification of Montana laws and to provide for recodification on a continuing basis.

"Recodify" is defined to mean "compile, arrange, rearrange, and prepare for publication... without changing the meaning, effect, or intent of any law."

**First African American**

Rep. Geraldine Travis, a Democrat from Great

Falls, becomes the only African American ever to serve in the Montana Legislature. She serves only one term.

### **Legislative Fiscal Division**

Lawmakers create the Legislative Fiscal Division, to help estimate revenue from state taxes and analyze the executive budget.

### **1979**

#### **First Female Majority Leader**

Ann Mary Dussault, a Democrat from Missoula, becomes the first woman to serve as majority leader in the Montana House of Representatives.

### **1981**



#### **Capitol Restoration**

47th Legislature appropriates \$6.7 million to restore the Capitol as closely as possible to its original appearance. The restoration includes a return to the original decorative paint scheme, which had been painted over in 1936. A barrel vault, removed in 1964 to make another hearing room, is also restored. The restoration work took place in 1999-2000.

### **1992**

#### **Term Limits**

Montanans vote 2 to 1 to limit terms of elected officials. As a result, legislators and other state officials may serve no more than 8 years in a single office in a 16-year period.

### **1999**

#### **Open Caucuses**

In response to a lawsuit filed by Montana media, 56th Legislature opens its caucuses to the public. Later Legislatures continue the practice.

### **2001**

#### **Public Affairs TV**

57th Legislature establishes a state government

broadcasting service (Television Montana, or TVMT) to provide gavel-to-gavel coverage of legislative and administrative proceedings.

## 2003

### Public Participation

58th Legislature gives the public the right to comment at a public meeting on any matter within the jurisdiction of the public entity holding the meeting, even if the topic is not on the agenda.

## 2007



### First Female Leader in Senate

Carol Williams, a Democrat from Missoula, becomes the first woman to serve as majority leader in the Montana Senate.

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