

Spring Magazine 2021

Montana Message by Brad Longcake

We hope that this year is off to a good start for you and yours. We hit the ground running, happily leaving 2020 behind. November's election was Republican-dominated for our national and statewide elections. Both the Congressional House seat and Senate seat stayed red after a hotly contested and very close race for the Senate. Senator Daines was able to maintain his position after the race set new records for campaign spending.

For the first time in sixteen years the state has a Republican governor and Republican majority in both the House and the Senate. The biannual meeting of our state legislature kicked off on January 4th. It has been interesting navigating uncharted territory trying to convene amid a pandemic. Most of the Republican legislators have chosen to attend in person while most Democrats are choosing remote participation. After a year of Zoom meetings, they have successfully implemented this hybrid format but it certainly presents challenges.

On just his second day in office Governor Gianforte appealed to the legislature to quickly move forward with legislation aimed at liability protection. As a part of a larger strategy for repealing the current statewide mask mandate implemented by his predecessor, Governor Gianforte first wants to ensure businesses are protected. It looks as though the bill will pass both the House and Senate in the next few weeks. The association is closely monitoring a number of bills that will affect our members across the spectrum of our industry including alcohol, tobacco, vape, tax, and local governments.

We are working closely with the governor's office as we move forward with a new appointment to the Petrol Board. It is our hope that the new appointee is in place by our first meeting in February. We are also anticipating the results of the legislative audit will be available some time in February. We have been working on this audit for almost 2 years and we are looking forward to the findings. There are currently no bills to try to remove money again from the PTRCB and give it directly to DEQ. This is an important issue and we are closely monitoring it.

We are moving forward with plans for our annual convention and trade show in June at Fairmont Hot Springs. COVID-19 derailed most plans last year, but we are hopeful that the situation is improved by the summer and that we are able to come together for fun and fellowship. We are scheduled June 1st & 2nd and cannot wait to see everyone!

We will certainly miss being in Las Vegas in February for the WPMA Convention. 2020 has given us new insight into the Roaring 1920's. After World War I and the Spanish flu people were ready to get out and live life to the fullest. Hopefully we will also come out of these dark times with renewed zest for life and appreciation of what is truly important.

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