

Handbook Highlight from the Montana Municipal Officials Handbook

7.102 POLITICAL PARTIES

Do political parties make a difference in Montana's local electoral politics?

Survey work conducted by the Local Government Center of mayors and council members showed the majority of those sampled reported political party affiliation had little or no influence on their policy decisions or election. In nonpartisan municipal elections, name recognition frequently seems to be the decisive advantage. Whether a municipal election is on a partisan or nonpartisan ballot, the role of political parties in the general election of Montana's local officials is relatively minor, as compared to the important role that local political parties continue to play in the election of state and national officials. No doubt there are still municipalities where this general characterization is less than accurate. Because most municipal elections are nonpartisan, the county election administrator may waive the requirement for a primary election if there are no more than twice as many candidates for an office as there are open positions on the general election ballot (MCA [13-14-115](#), MCA).