

MONTANA



FREE PRESS

# Growth & Gratitude Report

2020-2021

**Montana Free Press is an innovative, nonpartisan, public-powered news organization dedicated to delivering the information needs of all Montanans.**

We engage, listen, and provide our audiences the tools they need to make informed decisions by producing independent, high-quality reporting that is free and accessible to everyone. We couldn't do this work without the support of our readers who contribute significant financial support to this endeavor.

**After five successful years, MTFP is proud to share our first impact report to illustrate our rapid growth as the state's leading digital-first news organization and the ways we've informed and engaged our audiences.**

# Making an impact in Montana

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## Advancing the standards for journalism in Montana

Our best-in-class reporters elevate the bar for quality journalism in Montana. In a recent audience survey, when asked how they would respond if MTFP ceased to exist, 73% of readers said they would feel they had lost a source of news that they can't find anywhere else.

Our journalism peers recognize our high-caliber work as well. Matt Volz, Mountain States Editor of Kaiser Health News, shared, **"We need your journalism, but mainly, you're just damn good storytellers."**

A Great Falls Tribune reporter covering the Legislature told us she used our digital Capitol Tracker tool almost to the exclusion of the official legislative website while researching bills for her reporting.

## Informing leaders and policy decisions

The Montana Legislative Revenue Interim Committee included our property tax policy story in lawmakers' briefing materials, and the governor instituted a mandatory two-week quarantine for out-of-state visitors after our breaking story on visitors traveling to Montana mid-pandemic.

State legislators celebrated the release of our legislative tracking tools. A state senator shared that our Laws on Trial tool — a digital tool tracking lawsuits following the 2021 legislative session — was a **"dream come true."**

## Inspiring readers to take action on issues

After learning about particular issues from our in-depth reporting, readers tell us they're encouraged to make donations to support specific causes. Additionally, after reading Emily Stifler Wolfe's article "Common Ground: Part I" on regenerative agriculture, more than 80% of readers polled said they would like to read more about food production systems and techniques.

## Providing unprecedented nuance

Our audience recognizes the value of complex reporting that includes diverse perspectives and elevates historically oppressed voices, such as our June 2021 story on critical race theory that highlighted the education issue's impact on Native American communities in Montana. Another reader shared, **"Your coverage really led the way in people using better terminology and quoting people with actual knowledge [of LGBTQ issues]. It was such an enormous change!"**

## Building trust in the media

Readers value the truth we present, even when it's not what they want to hear. One reader responded to a story about the attorney general by sharing, **"you have stripped away the fluff and let the facts speak truth, as unappetizing as sometimes that may be."**

*"John Adams and his team provide more than a cursory view of the issues through extensive reporting not often seen in other venues."*

— Michael Tucker, editor, Belgrade News



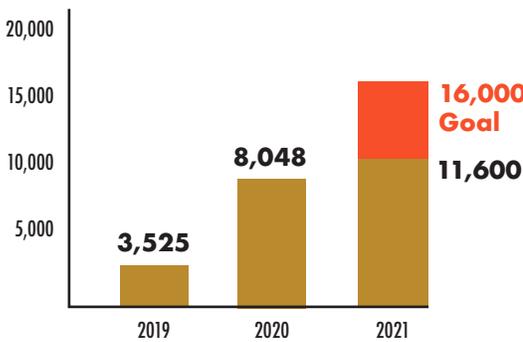
## An award-winning newsroom



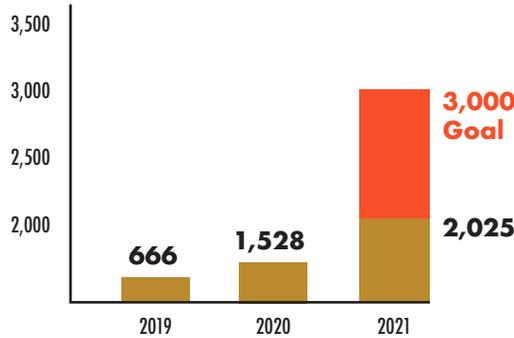
# Montana Free Press by the numbers

**11,000+**  
email newsletter  
subscribers

**Newsletter subscribers**  
128% Growth YOY

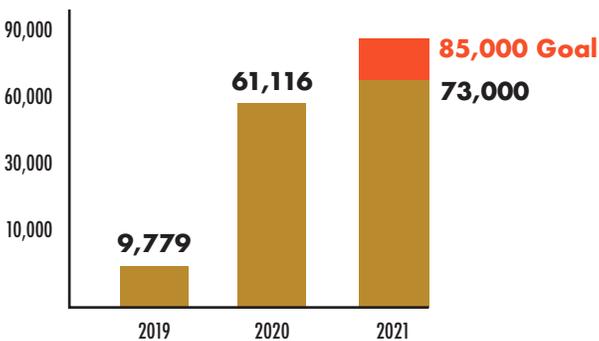


**Donating members**  
129% Growth YOY



**73,000**  
average monthly  
visitors to our  
website

**Average monthly  
website visitors**  
525% Growth YOY



**Members who renewed  
their support**

**72%**  
in 2021

**58%**  
in 2020

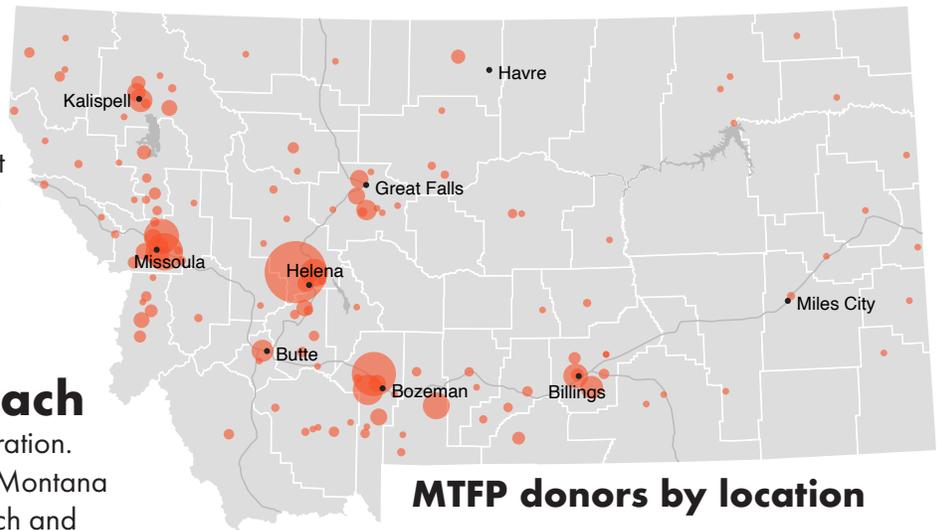
**More than  
2,000**  
donating members

## A public-powered newsroom

Our mission is to meet the needs of our readers, as we couldn't do this work without their support. As an independent newsroom operating without advertising, we rely on our donating members to supplement foundation grants and major gifts.

## A collaborative approach

Our nonprofit newsroom thrives on collaboration. We've developed strong partnerships with Montana media outlets to broaden our audience reach and expand our impact.



Montana  
Public Radio

During Montana's 2020 election season and 2021 legislative session, Montana Free Press collaborated with Montana Public Radio and Yellowstone Public Radio to produce the podcasts "Shared State" and "The Session," both of which aired on public radio and were widely available for download.



During the 2021 Montana Legislature, we provided daily two-minute news briefs for broadcast across the Northern News Network's more than 85 stations, connecting new audiences with our reporting.

We believe in the equitable access of information, as reflected in our reprint policy: we offer free republication of our stories to all news outlets, including local Montana print newspapers that have the trust and confidence of their local communities. In 2020:

**48** Montana newspapers published MTFP stories      **561** MTFP stories were published in print newspapers

## Straight from the source

"When I think of true investigative reporting in Montana, I think of the Montana Free Press. *They do the research before they write the story, presenting the highest level of detail and true analysis of any news shop in Montana, in fact some of the best work nationwide. They are an impressive contrast to the endless 'attention grabbing sound bite spewing' so called 'news' sources that exist today.*"  
— **Rep. Llew Jones, R-Conrad, Chairman of the Montana House Appropriations Committee**

"I continue to be impressed with MTFP and its well-written and balanced analysis of often times complex visions of the affairs of the state and political landscape. *MTFP is a trustworthy source of the state of current affairs in Montana for Montanans — well worth reading and supporting!*"  
— **Linda Vaughey, former Commissioner of Political Practices appointed by Governor Marc Racicot**

"Montana Free Press provides me with *the information I need to be a responsible citizen* of Montana." — **Jim Parker, reader from Hamilton, MT**

"I'd like to say *thanks for offering the kind of in-depth coverage* of statewide issues that we can't quite manage but our readers should have access to." — **Nikki Meyer, editor and publisher, Tobacco Valley News**