



P.O. Box 8537
Kalispell, Montana 59904
September 30, 2024

Governor Greg Gianforte
Montana State Capitol, Room 204
Helena, Montana 59601
Delivered via email.

Governor Gianforte:

On behalf of the taxpayers of Montana, I am requesting that you extend your arbitrary October 1 deadline for homeowners to proactively opt-in to get some of their hard-earned property tax money back. I'm also asking you to re-open the process so the nearly 66,000 Montanans who weren't able to get their rebates last year can get them this year. It is the very least you can and should do to help bring some relief to the historic property tax crisis you have caused.

Montana housing costs have skyrocketed. In fact, under your watch, Montana has even surpassed California to become the most unaffordable state in the country.¹

And you have made the problem worse, raising property taxes by as much as *111 percent*.² Yours is the largest property tax increase in Montana history. And while you've handed out tax breaks to millionaires and billionaires like yourself, your property tax increase is pricing hardworking Montanans and seniors out of their homes.

You also have yet to explain why you're the only homeowner in your Helena neighborhood who somehow got to pay *less* (a seven percent *decrease*) in property taxes on your privately owned home (618 Madison Avenue) last year.³ Virtually all of your neighbors got tax increases. The least you can do is take the arbitrary deadline out of your red-tape process so taxpayers—including your neighbors—don't have to race the clock to get their \$675 “rebates” back.

Nobody said you or the Legislature could keep their change. And “change” is exactly what it is.

¹ <https://missoulacurrent.com/montana-homebuyers-idaho/>

² <https://itax.gallatin.mt.gov/PDF/2023/MH/RFG34527.pdf>

³ <https://www.ktvq.com/news/montana-news/property-taxes-skyrocket-statewide-but-not-for-montanans-governors-properties>

While you have repeatedly, and falsely, claimed that a \$675 rebate “more than compensates” for your tax increase, thousands of Montanans beg to differ.⁴

Your neighbor at 600 Harrison Avenue in Helena got slapped with a \$3,643.49 property tax increase last year, bringing their total taxes to more than \$13,000 *in a single year*.⁵ It would take *six* of your \$675 rebates to “more than compensate” your 2023 tax increase.

In Bozeman, your next-door neighbors on Manley Road, both Montana citizens, got hit with a \$4,835.34 increase last year, bringing their 2023 property tax bill to a staggering \$11,683.81.⁶ That’s a 70 percent increase compared to 2022. But for reasons you have yet to fully explain, the property taxes on your home across the street went up only 19 percent.⁷

A \$675 rebate certainly helps homeowners like the neighbors who pay higher taxes than you do, but the last thing they need is to climb through red tape and arbitrary deadlines to get this money.

According to *Montana Free Press*, nearly 66,000 tax-paying households did not even get their \$675 rebates last year.⁸ That’s a *significant* number of homes—roughly equivalent to the population of Yellowstone County, the largest in our state. There’s no reason these folks should be denied their rebates.

Your red-tape, opt-in, arbitrary process for taxpayers to get some of this hard-earned money back requires them to track down their 17-digit “geocodes,” which is information the State of Montana already has. Your process requires homeowners to enter sensitive information like Social Security Numbers for themselves and all of their dependents, which is also information the State of Montana already has.

Given this is the last year Montana homeowners will be able to apply to get some of their own money back, you extending the deadline through the end of the year—at the very least—will at least give more time to more Montanans to get the money they are due. And allowing the tens of thousands of households you shortchanged last year to get their 2023 rebates would certainly help take some of the sting out of your unaffordable Montana.

Sincerely,



Ryan Busse
Kalispell

⁴ https://youtu.be/jzLT_766xJg?feature=shared&t=110

⁵ <https://itax.tylerapp.com/LewisAndClarkMT/PDF/2023/RE/21518.pdf>

⁶ <https://itax.gallatin.mt.gov/PDF/2023/MH/RFG9133.pdf>

⁷ <https://itax.gallatin.mt.gov/PDF/2023/MH/RFH9832.pdf>

⁸ <https://montanafreepress.org/2023/10/04/about-three-quarters-of-eligible-homeowners-apply-for-property-tax-rebates/>