

COPP Requirements for Political Signage Attribution (Paid for by) Information and Other Resources for Political Sign Requirements (October 2019)

Office of Political Practice: Political Sign Attribution Requirements

When it comes to political signs, the COPP has jurisdiction only in upholding and enforcing attribution requirements. In other words, the only oversight over political signs that the COPP has is in ensuring the required “paid for by” attribution message is included, and that the expense is disclosed fully in a campaign finance report. The COPP does not have oversight over when citizens may begin to display political signs or when those signs must be taken down.

More guidance on the “paid for by” attribution requirements is available on the COPP’s website at <http://politicalpractices.mt.gov/Education-and-Resources/Attribution-Information>. See [Mont. Code Ann 13-25-225](#) and [44.11.601\(2\) ARM](#) for the full attribution requirements and applicability.

Municipal Governments: Political Sign Timeline Guidance

The Office of Political Practices often receives phone inquiries regarding the timeline for placing political signs. As stated above, the COPP has no jurisdiction over when political signs may be displayed, and does not know the specific requirements for each Montana municipality. Local governments (i.e. a city council or county commission) are responsible for regulating when political signs may be placed and when they must be taken down. Contact your local city or county government for more information.

The Montana Department of Transportation is responsible for sign regulations along Montana roadways or right of way (see the below information for more details).

Montana Department of Transportation: Highway Sign Placement Guidance ([ARM 18.6.246](#))

The Montana Department of Transportation is responsible for sign regulations along the state’s right of way.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION – Notice from Dept of Transportation / Right of Way Bureau (2012)

Political campaign committees, and candidates are being reminded again about restrictions on where their signs can be placed. Signs on highway fences, utility poles, and otherwise on state right of way are not allowed and are being removed by Department of Transportation crews.

With landowner’s consent, political signs may be placed alongside the highway on privately owned land. Many signs are being placed in ditches or on the highway side of fences. State crews must remove them and store them until the owners can pick them up. Candidates, and their supporters should make sure their signs are placed on private property.

Federal law requires that any sign intended to be read from the highway must be regulated by the state. In Montana, as in other states, controlling signs is the responsibility of the Department of Transportation. Failure to control signs brings the threat of federal sanctions and can disrupt highway improvement projects.

It is unsafe, and illegal to drive or park in a ditch along a highway to install a sign on private property.

Within 30 days following the applicable election the signs should be removed.

The candidates' cooperation in adhering to the regulations, and statutes will benefit the Department of Highways, and the taxpayers of Montana.

Contact information:

Right of Way Bureau: (406) 444-6055, www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/organization/precon.shtml

Rob Stapley, Bureau Chief – 406-444-6063 / Gabe Priebe – Traffic and Safety Bureau Chief – 406-444-9252

Associated Rules of Montana 18.6.246 Guidance on Political Signs

[18.6.246](#) POLITICAL SIGNS

(1) Signs promoting political candidates or issues shall be placed on private property only and cannot be placed without the permission of the property owner. Political signs must comply with sign standards found in [75-15-113](#), MCA, and ARM [18.6.231](#), unless otherwise specified in this rule.

(2) Political signs must not:

- (a) be placed on or allow any portion to intrude in the public right-of-way or on public property; and
- (b) be placed within 100 feet of any entrance to the building in which a polling place is located.

(3) Political signs will not be considered in determining the spacing required between conforming off-premises outdoor advertising signs.

(4) Political signs must be removed within 14 days following the applicable election. The department shall notify the landowner of illegal signs which are not removed within 14 days. The signs shall be removed by the department 24 hours after notification to the landowner. The department shall retain removed political signs for five working days after notification of removal before their destruction. The sign owner may retrieve the signs during this period.

(5) Signs that pose a traffic hazard may be removed by the department without prior notification to the sign owner.

(6) Political signs do not require permits and are not subject to permit fees.

History: [75-15-121](#), MCA; [IMP](#), [75-15-111](#), MCA; [NEW](#), 1996 MAR p. 1855, Eff. 7/4/96; [AMD](#), 2008 MAR p. 2476, Eff. 11/27/08; [AMD](#), 2012 MAR p. 185, Eff. 1/27/12; [AMD](#), 2016 MAR p. 1440, Eff. 8/20/16.