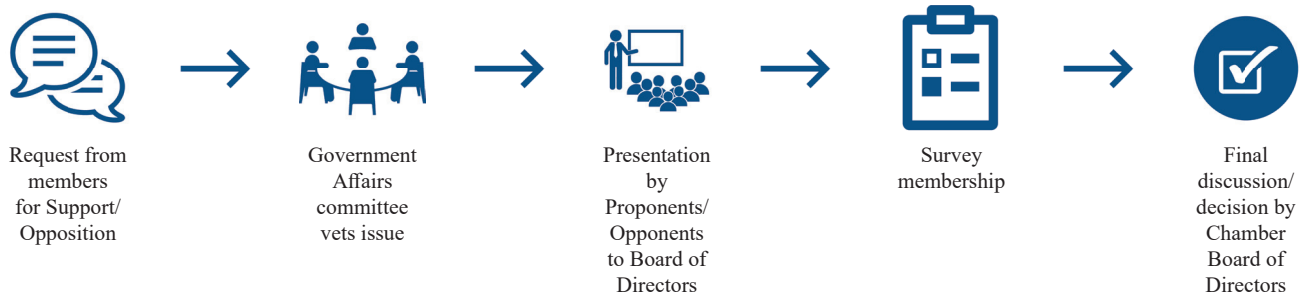




Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce Supports I-185

The Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce today joins many other Chambers of Commerce around Montana in support of Ballot Initiative I-185. The expansion of Medicaid is an important issue for our community as access to quality health care helps citizens return to, and remain in, the workforce, creating a larger talent pool for the many businesses in Missoula.

Missoula Chamber Issue Position Process



Though we support the initiative, we have deep concerns surrounding the funding source. Increasing the tax on tobacco products targets a single sector affecting the health care industry. If the measure succeeds in reducing the number of people using tobacco products (a stated goal of the initiative), there is a concern that the funding source for Medicaid Expansion would not cover the expenses of the program. The decision to support I-185 was not an easy one. The Chamber's Board of Directors pursued a thorough process to vet this issue. They heard from proponents and opponents for the measure and spent a good deal of time learning about and discussing the issue. Additionally, we have heard from our members, via a survey. A majority of those who responded are in favor of this initiative.

The Missoula Chamber urges our state legislators to take up this issue during the 2019 Legislative session to find a more equitable and stable source of funding for Medicaid Expansion. Unfortunately, the Legislature's lack of action during the previous session has left the program on the verge of sunseting without a plan for continuing expansion – leaving I-185 as the most viable option for continuing the program.

The Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce has supported policy in favor of expansion of Medicaid for several years. We would prefer that an initiative dealing with this much budgetary spending be handled by the Legislature. Their failure to act before now has led us to today and the Chamber's decision to support passage of I-185. Medicaid expansion has shown to be a benefit for the Missoula economy and our workforce. The program needs to continue.

Respectfully,
Missoula Area Chamber of Commerce

Will Johnson, Chair of the Board of Directors

Kim Latrielle, President/CEO

If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Clint Burson, Director of Government Affairs at (406) 215-1323 or clintb@missoulachamber.com.