

# **MFBF Supreme Court Candidate Questionnaire**

## ***2026 Election***

**Q: What is your background? (Where are you from? What is your education? What experience do you have that relates to agriculture?)**

**Eddy:** I grew up outside of Stanley, Idaho with my parents and two younger sisters. We were snowed in during the winter. When I started kindergarten, I cross-country skied 2.5 miles down the road to catch the school bus to take me into town. I started school in a K-8 elementary school with ten students. That type of upbringing gives you a very unique type of independence. I started working in the kitchen of a family restaurant with my dad when I was 12, and I have been working ever since.

I graduated from the University of Montana School of Law in 2001, and spent the next 15 years representing everyday Montanans in court—individuals, small business and working families who needed their voice to be heard. I have now spent more than a decade as a District Court Judge and have handled more than 10,000 cases all across the State. The Montana Supreme Court appointed me in 2017 to also establish the Asbestos Claims Court to resolve the claims of thousands of individuals exposed to asbestos in Libby, Montana.

Other than dating the son of an alfalfa farmer in college and cooking for the crew during harvest, my agricultural experiences have primarily focused on food.

**Wilson:** I am a fourth-generation Montanan born in Billings in 1964. My parents, grandparents, and great grandparents lived in Phillips County.

I attended college at Penn State, where my father was a professor of veterinary science. His early research at MSU in Bozeman produced an effective vaccine for a common infection in cattle, which later led to his teaching at Penn State. After college, I attended law school and graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School. After passing the Montana bar exam in 1993, I worked as a prosecutor in Great Falls, Chinook, and Kalispell before going into private law practice.

My great grandfather homesteaded south of Malta in 1913 and my grandfather farmed the land until his retirement. As a kid, I helped out on the family farm. After moving to Kalispell in 1995, I married into a farming and ranching family and have spent years working with both crops and livestock.

**Q: Why do you want to be a Supreme Court Justice?**

**Eddy:** I am running for the Montana Supreme Court because Montanans deserve a Supreme Court Justice who is experienced, fair and impartial. They deserve a Justice who believes in independent, nonpartisan courts and the rule of law. A Justice who will keep politics out of the courtroom, who is not afraid to protect our individual freedoms, and hold criminal defendants and other wrongdoers accountable. A Justice who will interpret and apply the law with rigor, clarity and consistency so our communities are safe and stable. The Montana Supreme Court is not a legislature. It is a court of law. And it must remain a

place where every Montanan—regardless of background, income, or political belief—can expect a fair shake.

**Wilson:** The Montana Supreme Court makes rulings every day that shape the lives of Montanans across our state; more than most people realize. I was raised with a deep reverence for the law and the fundamental principle of playing by the rules. While the Montana Constitution grants the judiciary significant authority, Supreme Court Justices must respect the power of the people and their elected representatives to make our laws. The bench is meant to interpret the law, not create it.

**Q: What qualities do you believe are most important in a Supreme Court Justice?**

**Eddy:** Supreme Court Justices must have outstanding legal knowledge and intellect and a commitment to the rule of law that allows them to thoroughly research and logically apply the law to the facts of a specific case. They must have clear communication skills and a judicial temperament that allows them to build consensus towards a majority opinion. They must have the work ethic to get the work of the court done in a timely manner to resolve the dispute before it. Finally, they must be independent and impartial so that everyone who appears before them knows they are getting a fair shake, and they must have the courage to make the correct legal decision, even if it is unpopular.

**Wilson:** Discipline, hard work, and respect for the parties involved in lawsuits, and above all, respect for the rule of law and humility in carrying out the Supreme Court's responsibilities.

**Q: As a candidate, what are your top three priorities?**

**Eddy:** The most important issues for the judicial branch are to remain independent, maintain the public's trust, and, unless the law changes, maintain its nonpartisanship. Nonpartisan judicial elections are a Montana tradition for a reason. It has been, and remains, the policy of this State that judges should not be held captive by political parties. We do not want our judges taking loyalty oaths to political party platforms. Before a judge makes a decision, we do not want them asking whether the decision will jeopardize a political party endorsement or political party campaign contributions. This is the first election cycle in Montana during which political parties have been allowed to contribute directly to judicial candidates. I firmly believe that judges who accept political party contributions undermine both nonpartisan judicial elections and public confidence in the judicial branch. I have traveled all around the State and I have not spoken to a single person who believes we should have more partisanship—let alone in judicial races.

**Wilson:** Ensure the Supreme Court does not exceed its authority or legislate from the bench.

Make common sense decisions that follow the true intent of the Montana Constitution and our laws.

Make the Montana Supreme Court more accessible and transparent to all Montanans by holding more public hearings and by publishing summary explanations of cases, particularly where the rulings have state-wide impact.

**Q: In your view, what are the three most important issues facing Montana agriculture?**

**Eddy:** While I am not directly involved in the agricultural industry, and the issues would vary by sector, stagnant commodity prices combined with increasing costs of machinery and chemicals, labor shortages, and access to predictable loans, grants and insurance policies are issues that are impacting the industry as a whole.

**Wilson:** Maintaining economic viability of family farm and ranch operations through tax laws and policies that allow operations to pass down to succeeding generations.

Balancing environmental standards with property rights to prevent burdensome overregulation of land use and stewardship practices.

Protecting and growing markets for agricultural commodities and finished ag products.

**Q: What role do you believe the legislature plays in implementing the right to a clean and healthful environment?**

**Eddy:** The Montana Constitution, states that “[a]ll persons are born free and have certain inalienable rights. They include the right to a clean and healthful environment . . .” The Montana Constitution goes on to state:

- (1) The state and each person shall maintain and improve a clean and healthful environment in Montana for present and future generations.
- (2) The legislature shall provide for the administration and enforcement of this duty.
- (3) The legislature shall provide adequate remedies for the protection of the environmental life support system from degradation and provide adequate remedies to prevent unreasonable depletion and degradation of natural resources.

The Legislature is responsible for implementing the right to a clean and healthful environment—consistent with the expectations and requirements of the Montana Constitution. The Executive Branch is then responsible for carrying out those legislative policies. For example, the Montana Department of Agriculture has a Climate Pollution Reduction Grant which allocates \$9 million for “emerging technologies that improve profitability while reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the beef cattle supply chain.”

**Wilson:** According to the delegates to the 1972 Constitutional Convention and the clear language of the Constitution, itself, the Legislature has primary authority to determine how the right to a clean and healthful environment is administered and how it is enforced.

**Q: Do you believe that prior to limiting a person's property rights the state must establish a compelling state interest?**

**Eddy:** Economic prosperity relies on stable private property rights. The right to acquire, possess and protect property is a fundamental, inalienable right under the Montana Constitution. As a fundamental

right, laws restricting these private property rights must be necessary to address a “compelling state interest,” be “narrowly tailored” to address that compelling state interest, and be the least restrictive means to achieve the compelling state interest. The law in this area is well-established.

**Wilson:** Yes. This is a well-established principle in Montana law.

**Q: What are your views on separation of powers between the 3 branches of government?**

**Eddy:** The separation of powers describes a structure of government that divides power among the three branches, each with distinct responsibilities. Checks and balances between the branches minimize the concentration of power and enhance the accountability of all three branches. This separation of power is expressly incorporated in the Montana Constitution.

Of course, governmental powers sometimes overlap and sometime are too complex to be clearly compartmentalized. As a result, there is an inherent measure of conflict and competition among the branches, which is generally viewed as healthy. However, we can also look back on periods of time when one branch or the other has had a particularly muscular expression of its power prompting the other branches respond in kind.

For the judiciary, the separation of powers requires both respect for the roles of the other branches and a clear understanding of the limits of judicial authority. Courts are tasked with interpreting and applying the law—not making policy or substituting their judgment for that of the legislative or executive branches. At the same time, the judiciary has an essential responsibility to uphold the Montana Constitution and to ensure that the actions of the other branches are within constitutional limits.

**Wilson:** None of the three branches of government may override the authority of any other branch of government. While the courts have the final say on what the law means, the Supreme Court does not have the only say. Justices of the Supreme Court must exercise restraint and avoid overstepping their authority. They must also respect the lawmaking authority of the Legislative and Executive branches of government.

**Q: What was the general nature of your practice? Indicate any areas of practice in which you concentrated.**

**Eddy:** I was in private practice for 15 years, focused on a plaintiff-oriented complex civil litigation practice. Towards the end of my practice, I was primarily handling constructive defect cases on behalf of homeowners, as well as one school district.

**Wilson:** My law practice was as wide and varied as I could make it. I represented people in every kind of legal issue and dispute, covering everything from contracts, estate planning and disputes, construction law, family law, banking and finance, personal injury, criminal law, and some bankruptcy matters. My goal was to be in the courtroom as much as possible and to see how the law operates from the perspective of everyone involved in the legal system.

**Q: What endorsements have you received in this race?**

**Eddy**: I have received the endorsement of 7 sitting and retired Montana Supreme Court Justices, and 29 sitting and retired District Court Judges from more than 30 counties. I have also received the endorsement of the Montana Sportsmen Alliance, Big Sky 55+, Montana AFL-CIO, MFPE, Montana Conservation Voters, Montana National Organization for Women, and Nurses for America. A complete list is available at [amyeddyforjustice.com](http://amyeddyforjustice.com).

**Wilson**: Montana Chamber of Commerce, Montana Stockgrowers Association, Montana Mining Association, Montana Association of Realtors®, and Montana Contractors Association.