

Summary of Results of Legislator Survey
Part 2 - Legislator Scheduling and Calendar

Q14. Some state legislatures meet for a five-day work week. Assuming it would not delay the traditional end of the session, would you prefer a five legislative day work week to better accommodate matters such as constituent contact, family, and business? (Please understand that such a change would require five FULL legislative days of work.)

n=94 responses

- Yes 47 50.54%
- No 46 49.46%

Q15. Please share any problems, concerns, advantages or disadvantages that you would anticipate due to adoption of a five full legislative day work week:

n=71 responses

Concern for length of session, amount of work

- Advantages: ability to work day job on the weekends. Concerns: ability to get all legislative business done to adjourn on time.
- I can see pros and cons for a 5 day work week. I have no preference on status quo or a five day work week.
- I said yes on this because I have a family and would like to go home weekends. That being said, I am concerned that five days will not be enough time to get our work done. As it is now, I work five full days during session. Maybe this is because I am on appropriations, which meets quite often.
- Time to get the legislative work done. Could start in December instead of January and do 5 days, but need end in April.
- Less stress and more time for family, friends and constituents, but an even more compressed timeline to learn about and deal with the issues, reduced pay which is already abysmal, more travel to and from home which is stressful, less time to work with legislative staff on legislation so we would be committing even more unpaid time to research and development of legislation.
- The meetings will go past 5 PM. The break in between allows me to do research, contact constituents and prepare for testimony.
- There are ebbs and flows to legislative work. We would need to accommodate times when work is light, and perhaps more than five days when we are around calendar deadlines.
- Seems like it would be difficult for leadership to schedule.
- I worry there would not be enough time each week.
- Let's just go to Helena and get it done and go home.
- Not sure what a full legislative day would mean. We already start at 7 am and often go well into the evening.
- I have a family. A five day work week would allow me to see my family on the weekends. It would also allow me to catch up on professional obligations outside of the legislature. I would much prefer a five day a week work week.
- Of course, I would generally prefer a five day work week - but ONLY if it would not affect the overall # of days we have for session. 90 days is, in my opinion, too few days to adequately

do our work. I would certainly oppose reducing our sessions to less than 90 days. In fact, I think our sessions should be longer.

Disadvantages

- Do NOT want session extended to accommodate 5 days.
- Would this extend the day? I can't imagine cramming 6 days of legislative work into 5 days; we work such long hours during the session as it is!
- We need to stick to business and get it done. It is a sacrifice to leave your family, business, community, etc. Let's make the time as fast and constructive as possible. No need to drag out the inevitable. Let's do the people's business and go home.
- Not enough time to get through the session.
- Session would extend too long.
- Prolonging the time in Helena will result in a further mismatch between legislative demographics and constituent demographics. It is already very difficult for non-retirees with non-government jobs to separate themselves for four months of session. Adding any time to this would make it impossible.
- My concern is it could lead to future sessions lasting longer into April and May!
- Let's face it, we are faced with an avalanche of print or electronic material and need time to incorporate bill information, amendments, and research options.
- I read bills every night and am on Approps. Would be difficult to put it all together and still get any sleep.
- Stretching the session out into May?
- I like it the way we have it now.
- MY EXPENSES WOULD GO UP GREATLY IF MY CONSTITUENTS KNEW I HAD WEEKENDS OFF. THEY WOULD WANT ME HOME FOR DISCUSSIONS.
- The session would go longer. My job requires it to end when it does.
- Too much to learn in such a short period. If we are there, let's work.
- Length of Session Calendar.
- The more strung out it is, the longer and drawn out it will get. I do like the specific schedule.
- Going into May would be a problem.
- I am not sure what is meant by a FULL legislative day. If the bills are not there to be heard in committee, there is no sense in just sitting around. Going to 5 days would give the taxpayers better value as Saturday is generally a short day. I am also unclear how to cut 1 day per week from the 90 day session and not extend the final date.
- I fear removing the 6th day will unexpectedly change the process by removing the time to get caught up with the Saturday House Session. One of the two houses may need the time to coordinate better. We are there to be in session.
- Concern, prolong end of session, pro more family/business time.
- A longer session.
- We need to meet somehow for longer periods.
- None expected.

On Saturdays (advantages)

- Saturday is usually just floor session, run a second agenda on Friday.
- Most Saturday sessions do not have committee meeting or much happening anyway.
- Saturday sessions are a waste of time in general.

- We wouldn't have to burn a whole day's budget for a partial day's work if we stop meeting on short Saturdays. Travelers could go home for the weekend too.
- Saturday mornings currently are do nothing most of the session. We could get that work done on Fridays or Mondays
- I don't see any. Saturdays are largely wasted anyway. And if there was an urgent need for a Saturday session, we could always schedule it.
- Working a 5 day week would allow time for business and personal issues. It would also allow legislators to work on legislative matters back home. (allow meeting time with groups) It would also allow some time to read bills better and work with other legislators on pending bills. As an older member it would also allow some recharge rest time. This recharge time would help cut down on the number of health issues that come up during the session.
- The advantage is that legislators will have more time to prepare for the work each week, and to read up and study bills.
- MORE DISTRICT INPUT.
- We would be more productive.

On Saturdays (disadvantages)

- I believe that the Saturday early morning session helps clear the slate for the prior week's work and allows us to start the next week with much of our backlog closed out. It also gives me time to interact with my colleagues without the schedule of committee hearings conflicting.
- It would extend the session into May. The Saturday session is critical at transmittal time as well as at the end of the session
- Saturday is a great day to relax more, seems we got more done, maybe not, most people don't go home anyway. Lots goes on Saturday afternoon. Not sure what the answer is.
- Saturdays are fine if we work the WHOLE day. Gaveling in Saturday morning for 2 housekeeping bills in order to "burn the day" is a waste of taxpayer money.
- I would rather stick to the present schedule which allows for a legislative session on Saturdays. As we currently have committee meetings that go late into the evening, I don't see how much 'FULLER' we can make the week days.
- I think we should continue with a 6 day week and also include committee meetings on Saturdays too so more of the public could attend committee hearings.
- Our current schedule, although very busy, is also very effective. The attention of my constituents is focused during the session, and many of them PREFER to travel to Helena for the Saturday sessions because that's not a workday for them. I think our current six-day-a-week schedule is preferable.
- If a full Friday of work, you can't really take off anyway. An hour or two on Saturday gets a lot of work done.
- Our days are already very long without adding to them in order to eliminate the Saturday session. A longer House session would cut short our afternoon committee meetings which already often go into the evening. I communicate with my constituents via cards, letters, phone calls and emails. I realize that the six day weeks are difficult for families and legislators who live far from Helena.
- We may need an occasional Saturday to complete work.
- Many people live too far away to drive home anyway, so an alternative would be to work all day on Saturday and shorten the session.

- Sessions are spread out over a longer period of time. Make better use of Saturdays on the current six-day/weekly arrangement.

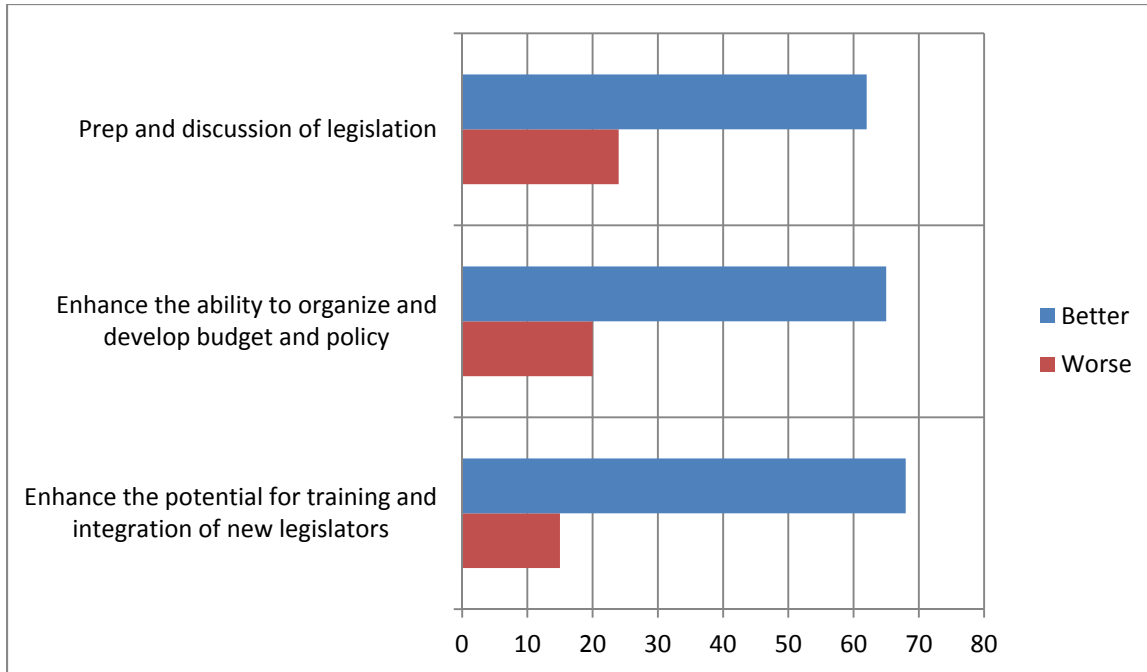
Committee-related concerns

- The busier committees could use more meeting time to give better and fairer hearings on bills later in the session.
- Lengthy floor sessions that could hinder committee work.

Travel-related comments and concerns

- This doesn't do anything for those legislators too far from Helena to commute home for the weekend.
- If I have every weekend off from legislative or committee work in Helena, it would consume a great deal of time and money to travel home for just a few hours.
- Still a long drive home for many who would not be helped by this.
- Travel costs home on weekends.
- Distance from Helena too far to go home on weekends and be back on Monday for eastern half of Montana.
- Longer time to rent lodging in Helena, still long way to travel home.
- I live so far away from Helena, I would rather--get the work done.
- Due to travel to my District a five day work week would not be of any advantage.
- Since so many legislators live far away from Helena, a 5 day instead of 6 day week would prolong the session at their inconvenience.
- More dead time on the weekends, when many people would still be unable to go home due to distance.
- It is too far to drive home for some legislators. Like the Saturday sessions. They seem less stressful than most afternoon sessions.

Q16. Over half of the states delay the start of the odd-year session until later in January or early February. Do you think this would be better or worse for the legislative process with respect to the following issues? (Note: 5-2-103, MCA, will require the 2015 session to convene on January 5, 2015.)



	Better	Worse	Total
Prep and discussion of legislation	62 (72%)	24 (28%)	86
Enhance the ability to organize and develop budget and policy	65 (76%)	20 (24%)	85
Enhance the potential for training and integration of new legislators	68 (82%)	15 (18%)	83

Comments (n=31)

Positive

- I think we should be sworn in on the day we do now by law. I also believe we should have a few days of training then recess for at least two weeks to allow formulation of budget amendments and/or policy refinement.
- This would also give new Governors more time to prepare for Session.
- Especially with large number of new legislators, more time is needed for prep and training.
- Moving the start of the session to a full year after election work give legislators time to learn the process plus we could hold committee meetings prior to the session and hearings on complicated bills.
- Starting even later (e.g., late February or early March) could lead to significant improvements in our ability to estimate revenue for the biennium.

Negative

- The issue left out is the fact that we wouldn't be dismissed until later in May or June. This puts us into a busier season for those in agriculture, construction, etc.
- Harder on agriculture people as a later start would mean a later ending conflicting badly with agriculture.
- Bad idea - this would force out many rural legislators.
- Opposed to later start. Can't go any later in the year for business reasons.
- If we are going to meet every other year the earlier the better for my business interests.
- A few weeks makes no difference, get started and be done.

Mixed

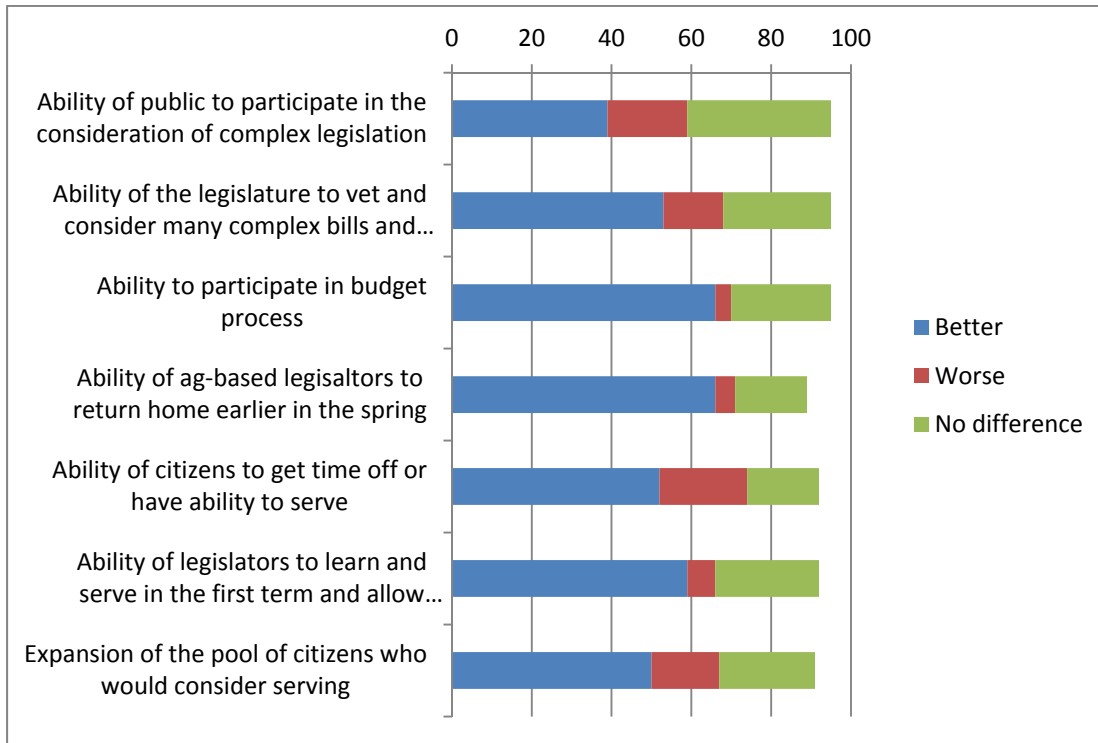
- All of this is better only if the number of legislative days is not reduced.
- It would give us more time to organize. However, might also give more time to generate more bills, and therefore more work.
- 6 or one half a dozen.
- Don't see how it would affect these categories unless there was specific time allotted for each issue. In other words, it could be better or it could be worse.
- Until we're looking at the Legislation, it's difficult to see what bills are actually working through the process. Obviously if we could see them all, we would have a better idea on what legislation could affect the budget. Can I vote gray on all three of the questions above?
- I do think legislators could better prepare for session if the state were to be delayed but I also believe the legislators would introduce even more bills if given more time.
- ALL THE ABOVE ARE NEEDED, BUT LATER START DATE MEANS A LATER FINISH DATE. LATER WOULD BE MORE OF HINDERANCE TO MANY RURAL LEGISLATORS.
- I feel that the answer to these issues falls somewhere in between better and worse. No matter when the session begins there will always be some who would find a change better and some worse.
- If the start is delayed, the session needs to run longer as I do not agree with less than up to 90 days. I see good and bad in all of the above so cannot mark "Better" or "Worse".

Other

- When spring hits, people need to get to work.
- People will take any and all time allotted to get up to speed.
- Not sure it will make a difference - need option for no change!
- There is great time compression between general election and commencement of session.
- A delay in our start MIGHT help preparation, but really, until we all arrive in Helena, little gets done. A later start would help bill drafting, certainly, but our current schedule of January through April seems to work well for the vast majority of us. I don't think most would want to push into May or June.
- The start date is not the problem it is getting the public and interest groups engaged.
- Once the weather gets nice, a lot of farmers and ranchers are outside working so it's better during the cold months. IMO
- As it is now, there simply is not enough time between the election and start of session for new legislators to be trained.
- I am neutral on the idea.
- Now we do our training and planning in late November and December, right in the middle of the Christmas season. This can be hard.

- The current scheme provides little time for new legislators to get up to speed. It allows little time for staff to draft bills.

Q17. 46 of 50 states now meet in annual session and 15 of those states still have a biennial budget process. Would meeting for a two-month session in each year be better, worse, or make no difference than the current schedule of meeting for one four-month session every other year with respect to the following issues?



	Better	Worse	No difference	Total
Ability of public to participate in the consideration of complex legislation	39	20	36	95
Ability of the legislature to vet and consider many complex bills and issues before it	53	15	27	95
Ability to participate in budget process	66	4	25	95
Ability of ag-based legislators to return home earlier in the spring	66	5	18	89
Ability of citizens to get time off or have ability to serve	52	22	18	92
Ability of legislators to learn and serve in the first term and allow increased training	59	7	26	92
Expansion of the pool of citizens who would consider serving	50	17	24	91

n=96

Positive

- We should do this!!
- Legislators are elected in November and attend the session in January. If they had a year to prepare for the session and get some bill drafts in, that first year would be much more productive. Also being a legislator for another year after your last session isn't productive.
- Still keep the 90 day total, but break it into 2 sessions.
- I strongly favor annual sessions.
- 46 states have it right.
- Annual session is an idea whose time has come, the state is too big and complex to have biannual session.
- An annual session is a critical and necessary change for the future of the Montana legislature.
- DO LAWS ONE YEAR AND BUDGET THE NEXT YEAR.

Negative

- The budget process takes the full term, how would you do it in half the time? I serve on Approps, don't see how this would be any better.
- I would think it would be difficult to find staff for just 2 months every year. I imagine it is expensive to ramp up each session.
- There are not that many "Ag" legislators, and those that are there are probably willing to put in the time to do the job right.
- In discussion with other legislators, most would NOT be able to take two months from their professions each year to serve. I think the pool of people able to find the time to serve would be diminished by annual sessions. I also believe that there is not enough policy legislation versus appropriation legislation, to warrant a "budget" session and a "policy" session. Annual sessions MIGHT give legislators the chance to learn more in between sessions, but as it is now, most legislators return to their regularly-scheduled lives and don't pore over policy between sessions...or even between their interim meetings.
- Not a fan of annual sessions. Just opportunity to spend more money.
- As far as I know, many professions would find it difficult to give an employee a two month break every single year. As a university instructor, it is better for me to take off one semester every other year than spring semester every year.
- Why disrupt two work years? This is working as is.
- Easier to rent an apartment for 4 months than 2. I signed a 6 month lease last time.
- One disadvantage to annual sessions would be lodging. Many people rent a house from a "snowbird" that is gone every year during the 4 month session. I suspect that more legislators would live in a hotel at an increased cost to them. Personally, I think with how fast issues arise, being able to respond to them faster would be a good thing.

Mixed

- There are a lot of variables in this question series. If we split the session into two yearly meetings and reserved one meeting for budget and the other for policy it might work. I see more bills introduced if we split sessions. If we did both budget and policy each meeting I see us just kicking the can down the road on 'tough' bills until the last meeting of the biennium, thus creating a bigger bottle neck than what we have now.
- Again, the influence of an annual session could prove to be better or worse for the above categories, but it would depend on how it is designed, e.g., adopt an annual budget but limit action on legislation.

- The reason I chose "no difference" on many of these questions is that serving EVERY year has a tradeoff with many employers. Yes, it might be easier for some to let that employee go for just two months, but the down side is now that will occur every year rather than just once every two years. I could see why some ag-based legislators could get home earlier in the spring, but many still would have calving season to worry about and they now would have to solve that concern every year.

Other

- I think it is very hard to truly know the answers to the last three questions in this section.
- It is a hardship to leave businesses and families for 4 months.
- We need to increase the total days... every year for 3 months is my suggestion.
- Annual sessions would be better--45-45, 40-50 or some combination and the budget should be the 2nd year and the 1st year all the other bills.
- Wyoming funds their standing committees between their annual sessions, and meetings are held around the state so constituents have much more ability to participate and learn about the issues.
- One session should be entirely Budget with only legislation brought forward that has a supermajority vote.
- Ability of legislative branch to provide checks and balances over the executive.
- Some questions above were left unanswered since I don't have an informed opinion.
- Good questions though.
- If we have a policy session and a budget session I would hope that all legislators would be on an appropriations committee.
- If we went to annual sessions we would need to change the function and role of the interim comm. Policy impacts budget.
- A 60 day session every year would work better than 45. And make every year a budget year.

Q18. Have you been unable or do you know of others who have been unable to recruit a good potential candidate to run for the legislature due to the length of the current four-month schedule?

Answers	Responses
Yes	49% (44)
No	51% (45)
Total	89

Comments

- It's a big commitment either way. Personally I would rather do it at once and have a little more time to get back to normal. It would be hard to take off every year, even if it was half the time.

Affordability, compensation

- Main reason is that people can't afford to do it. Many people will not run because of the stress the campaign has on their family, especially with the mud-slinging and all of limits political practices puts on the candidate. The bookkeeping regulations take a huge amount of time. The candidates are highly restricted and the PACs are unlimited in what they can do to elect or destroy a candidate.
- Low compensation.

- Job flexibility and pay major issue.
- The problem is integrally related with the extremely low compensation afforded legislators for their work. If we were compensated commensurate with our responsibilities, and at levels similar to comparable to other states, some of the calendar challenges could be ameliorated.
- Main reason is not enough money overall....
- Low pay which makes maintaining a "real" job critical, having to put up with "the crazies", leaving family for extended periods.
- Loss of wages...
- Low pay.
- LOW PAY, DISRESPECTFUL ATMOSPHERE.
- Cost of leaving current job.
- Expensive.
- The compensation is very low. The session is disruptive to family life no matter when it occurs. Some people are afraid they will not get their job back after a session ends. It's the nature of the job.
- Affordability-family responsibilities.
- Compensation, issues with employers (especially state employees).

Political atmosphere

- Extremists have made the prospect of service in the legislature to be an unsavory prospect for many people of good will and skill.
- Partisanship. Populace having diminished respect for the institution. Press treatment of legislators.
- Disturbed by some of the very negative campaigning.
- Most potential candidates are put off by the caustic nature of the politics in recent sessions. The four-month session isn't an issue; it prompts practical questions from potential candidates, like, is the schedule flexible enough to commute to Helena from Bozeman each day? [No] or, How do I find a place to rent for the session? [Legislative Services has a list of available rentals]
- Poor leadership in both parties and bad behavior reported by the news media.
- Nasty campaigns--Who needs it?

Ability to leave work/4-month session

- All my friends work full time and cannot leave their occupations.
- Our current structure of meeting into late April gets many of us into the busier economic time of the year, January and Feb are fine but March and April hurt due to the economy getting busier and agriculture activity is heating up too!
- 4 month session is number one reason for declining to run.
- That is the #1 reason.
- There are not very many employees/employers who can tolerate a four month absence every other year. However, two months every year would be much more reasonable and doable.

Time away from family/other/combination

- Term Limits.
- It's a thankless job; Helena's a fine town - in the summer; work-related commitments; family commitments; the fact that people are busier with less free time.
- Main stumbling block is time away from work/family.
- Sacrifice of income, family time.

- APATHY.
- Necessity of being away from home. But, I don't see it making any difference whether it is for 2 months or 4 months.
- Lack of child care during the session.
- Some people just can't get away for any reason.

Q19. Do you have any other ideas or comments for improvement of the legislative calendar?
n= 43

Comments

- I think that the State of Montana is getting a huge amount from their legislature. With the organization and time schedule, the legislature is highly productive. Legislators are truly public servants and most people do not know how much work they do in a short period of time. Doing a session every other year give people time to catch up their other work and recover from the stress of the sessions. We [sic] less campaigns and more continuity. A representative seat should be for 4 years and a Senate seat for 8 years. This would greatly reduce the campaign cost and the stress of being a legislator. The terms are short and legislators should be encouraged to finish their terms.
- The only time a committee member should be absent is when there is either a family emergency or when presenting as a primary sponsor in another committee. The same rule should apply to the use of proxy votes as well. Committee quorums should be maintained for the hearings on bills as that is a primary committee activity.
- I believe we can better use the calendar we have by setting expectations for committee chairs, and making days more productive. More time at the start of the session would help as well. I feel strongly that the appropriations process should not be separated in any way from the normal process - i.e. not have apropos folks meet at earlier or different times from rest of the body.
- It is working now.
- It may affect the ease (for the worse) of finding a rental in Helena.
- MORE EDUCATION FOR FIRST TERM LEGISLATORS.
- It hard for good young men and woman with families to serve in the current situation. It's definitely a sacrifice to do it currently but a great experience to continue to serve your constituents and state.
- Don't think that catering to select groups with changes serves the people of Montana. We know that every 2 years what the "gig" is and deal with the current conditions.
- The pay is extremely low, those legislators who make an excellent salary that takes you a year to recoup.
- No, N/A, None at this time, Not at present. Thank you for all your hard work!

Current session changes

- We need more time to legislate – i.e. more legislative days.
- Be more aggressive about planning legislation before the session, and also during first month of the session.
- I don't think the agricultural calendar is any more relevant than, for instance the academic or school year calendar, quite honestly; at this point in our history. Many of our rural legislators are not farmers, and those who are can serve only because they are part of a larger family operation with lots of support. I also think that planning for 2 (or even 3 day weekends in some instances)

provides people some opportunity to maintain farm, ranch or other business obligations at home.

- Start joint subcommittee hearings on budget prior to the convening of the session like Wyoming and North Dakota.
- Keep the biennial four-month session, and keep the January-through-April schedule. But after Election Day, it'd be mighty helpful for each party to reach out to its elected for some socialization, some explanation about process, bill drafting, lobbyists, etc., SOONER rather than LATER, and especially not just before caucuses.
- A five day week and later start are the two big things.
- Five day week for longer period would help.
- We need to take a week or so off at day 85 to allow the governor to amendatory veto bills and better study our body of work. This will allow the legislature to remain relevant.
- I really like the five day work week.
- Have another break around day 75, to transmit bills to the governor for veto/amendatory veto language so we don't have the same issues as this cycle, where the Governor blames leadership and leadership blames the Governor.
- Don't waste the first week with orientation. Have it done in December so we can get right to work in committee stuff.
- Don't have Saturday sessions the first 3 weeks of a legislative session. There are not enough bills to work do on the first 3 Saturdays.
- I do think that legislators should have access to flex funding that other state employees have. Parents need it for child care.
- I believe that some paid for provision for child care would be appropriate. Legislators should receive the same Flex spend options (for daycare) that the State employees receive during the session. See y'all soon.
- Legislators should be entitled to daycare compensation for their babies/toddlers similar to what is offered currently to other state employees. It is currently totally cost prohibitive for young parents and mothers to serve in the legislature unless they bring their children with them to the Capitol. We need to change this. We also need to get rid of term limits. They do not work in a small state like Montana.

Late session

- Start Approps subcommittees (which would include all legislators) in mid January thru end September similar to current interim committees, perhaps meeting once or twice a month. Start session early October with all subcommittees reporting on the budget. Take a week break for Thanksgiving and finish mid Dec. This would give legislators the ability to actually understand the budget. Food for thought.
- A five and sometimes four day work week would help business people to participate by allowing more time for them to continue to work in their business. Delaying the session until one year after election would provide more time for committee assignments, hearings and allow legislators to work together on bills. Currently many legislators are bringing bills on the same subject with no knowledge that others are working on similar bills. Once we got on this cycle we may be able to reduce the session to 65 or 70 days and use the savings for public hearings and committee meetings on bills prior to the session.
- I believe we should delay the start of the session and run till May for many reasons. Would be willing to discuss in detail if you wish.

Annual Sessions

- Five days per week, meeting over the summer on an annual basis would be better.
- 45 days a year MAXIMUM would be fine.
- Having a session each year will provide better constituent representation.
- Meet every year for 3 months... starting in February... increase overall pay... folks less than retirement age have to be financially independent to serve now. Go to 60 days per year and double the pay.
- We should have annual sessions of no longer than 70 to 90 day sessions total for the two years.
- Longer sessions one year seems to be more common, for instance, 50 days one year and 40 the second year. Funding of standing committees year-round is very important to making the system work.
- Legislative session = 50 days; Budget session = 40 days.
- If we were to go to annual sessions I would require one session for passage of new bills and the budget and the other session would only be for repeal of current laws.

Even-year sessions

- Change calendar so get elected, serve during interim and have session the 2nd year.
- I'm new, and still learning. Having a legislative session in the 'off' (even) year, solely to adopt/amend a budget, should be considered. The time frame would be compressed to a matter of weeks.
- Perhaps we should have elections in even numbered years and have the session begin the January of the following even numbered year. This would allow over a full year of training for new legislators.