

CAROL WILLIAMS

Dear Montana Democrats,

July 21, 2026

For seventy years, in the Legislature, as your nominee for Lt. Governor and beside Pat for 18 years in the U.S. Congress, we fought, and delivered for, the people of this state. I founded Carol's List to give Montana women a fair shot at leadership. I have never been afraid of a hard question, and I won't start now. So I will ask the one that matters most in this Senate race: who is Alani Bankhead, and why are we being asked to take her entirely on faith?

I want to be clear about what this is and is not. Supporting women in leadership does not mean waving them through without scrutiny. It means the opposite. The women I have spent my life recruiting earned their place by being tested, by being known, by having a record their neighbors could vouch for. Alani Bankhead has none of that. In her adopted hometown of Helena, Democrats say they had never heard of her before she filed for the United States Senate. She rode more than \$3 million in outside dark money from a single unknown super PAC into the nomination. That PAC has already walked away. When the money that manufactured a win vanishes the moment it is tested, that is not a fluke. That is a warning.

There is a deeper problem. Nearly everything we know about Bankhead comes from Bankhead. Her military service, her law-enforcement exploits, her arrest numbers, her book, her coaching business, her Senate run: she is the only source for all of it. That, of course, is not automatically disqualifying. Plenty of good candidates run on a personal story. But when the story is the entire campaign, the story had better hold up, and hers is already cracking. She has claimed she facilitated the arrest of "hundreds" of child abusers, terrorists and spies across the globe. In a general election against a Republican machine that Swiftboated a decorated war hero, a candidate whose biography inflates under the lightest scrutiny is not a risk we can afford to discover in October. It's also just plain wrong.

And I have not even reached the part that offends me most. Less than a year ago, on her coaching podcast, Bankhead said "[So if you're poor right now, it's because you decided you wanted to be poor.](#)" I was born into a teamster family in Butte. My father owned a grocery store and was Butte's beloved Mayor. I know exactly what that sentence does to people who work themselves to the bone and still cannot afford a house in the least affordable state in the country. Poverty is not a choice. It is systemic, it is man-made, and it can be overcome by the actions of human beings, including a United States Senator. Working people, including the working poor, are the backbone of our party. Her rhetoric belongs to Donald Trump. It has no home among Montana Democrats.

People will tell us this is settled, that primaries are final, that we play the hand we're dealt. I have heard that certainty before. For nearly half a century the home run was treated as an accident, until Babe Ruth swung from his heels and outhomered every other team, combined, in the league. What changed was not his biceps, but what he let himself swing for. We are told just as confidently that nothing can be done here. I do not accept that. Democrats have never been afraid to do hard things. In fact, these past days and months,

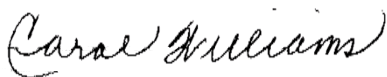
Democrats in California, Maine, Nebraska, and Alaska have done real soul searching, and all of us will be better for it.

This is not an ordinary seat and this is not an ordinary moment. One vote in the United State Senate seats or blocks the next Brett Kavanaugh. As this administration works to harden the country toward authoritarianism, as the people of Maine know too well, we cannot gamble on a candidate we do not know, cannot vouch for, whose record we cannot verify, and whose values are unknown.

The Montana Democratic Party has always stood for working people, vulnerable families, civil rights and reproductive freedom. A relentless commitment to these values matter more than any candidate.

So I am asking the leaders of this party, the officials, the donors, the faithful who have carried us through harder fights than this, to encourage Bankhead to drop out of this race. We need a nominee Montanans can trust, be proud of and who can win. Time is of the essence. Bankhead should step aside.

Sincerely,



Carol Williams

About Carol Williams

Carol Williams is a lifelong educator, public servant, and advocate for working families, public education, conservation, and women's leadership. A native of Butte, she began her career as a Head Start teacher before co-founding Peace Links, an international organization that connected more than 35,000 American and Russian women through cultural exchange and citizen diplomacy. She later served as a U.S. delegate to the 1995 United Nations Conference on the Status of Women in Beijing and worked with the U.S. Department of State on democracy-building initiatives encouraging women to run for public office.

Carol was the Democratic nominee for Lieutenant Governor in 2000 before serving in the Montana House of Representatives and the Montana Senate from 2004 to 2012. During her legislative career, she became the first woman to serve as both Majority and Minority Leader in the Montana Senate. She championed landmark legislation expanding access to full-day kindergarten, strengthening special education, protecting the rights of nursing mothers, improving children's healthcare, and advancing Indian Education for All.

Carol shared a lifetime of public service with her late husband, Congressman Pat Williams, Montana's longest-serving member of the U.S. House of Representatives. During his nine terms in Congress, he championed working families, wilderness conservation, tribal sovereignty, education, the arts, and workers' rights, leaving a legacy of principled leadership and commitment to Montana values.

Together they raised three children and dedicated their lives to strengthening Montana communities. Today, Carol continues that legacy through Carol's List, which recruits and supports progressive, pro-choice women seeking public office across Montana.