

# Jon Tester

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**Jonathan "Jon" Tester** (born August 21, 1956) is the Democratic junior U.S. Senator from Montana. Before this, he was President of the Montana State Senate.

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## Background

Tester was born in Havre, Montana, and grew up in Chouteau County, near the town of Big Sandy, Montana, on the same family land that his grandfather homesteaded in 1916. (The small town is also the birthplace of Jeff Ament of popular rock band Pearl Jam, who played a concert in Missoula in support of Tester's US Senate bid.<sup>[1]</sup>)

Tester grew up helping his family on their conventional farm, as well as helping run their butcher shop. Beginning in the late 1980s, Tester moved toward the more profitable organic farming; his family now grows organic wheat, barley, lentils, peas, millet, buckwheat, alfalfa and hay. They still operate their butcher shop for close friends and relatives, but no longer utilize it as a source of income.<sup>[2]</sup>

As a child, Tester lost the middle, index, and ring finger on his left hand in an accident while working with a meat grinder.

Tester has a Bachelor of Science degree in music from the University of Great Falls. He was subsequently a music teacher in the Big Sandy School District for a brief time, before returning to farming.

Tester's wife of 27 years, Sharla, also grew up in north-central Montana and comes from an agricultural family. Jon and Sharla have a daughter, Christine (son-in-law James), a son, Shon, and one grandchild, Kilikina.

## Political career

Tester served five years as chairman of the Big Sandy School Board of Trustees, and served on the Big Sandy Soil Conservation Service (SCS) Committee and the Chouteau County Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) Committee.

**Jon Tester**



**Junior Senator  
from Montana**

**Incumbent**

**Assumed office**

January 3, 2007–

Serving with Max Baucus

**Preceded by**

Conrad Burns

**Succeeded by**

Incumbent (2013)

**Born**

August 21, 1956

Havre, Montana

**Political party**

Democratic

**Spouse**

Sharla Tester

**Religion**

Church of God

Tester was first elected to the Montana State Senate in 1998. He was elected the minority whip for the 2001 session. After being re-elected in 2002, he became minority leader for the 2003 session. In 2005, Tester was elected President of the Montana Senate, the chief presiding officer of the Montana Legislature's upper chamber.

His election as President marked a significant transition for Montana Democrats as they moved into the majority leadership of the Senate for the first time in more than a decade.

Term limits would have prohibited Tester from running for state Senate for a third time.

## 2006 U.S. Senate race

Tester announced his candidacy in May 2005 for the U.S. Senate seat held by incumbent Republican senator Conrad Burns. Tester was the second Democrat to jump into the race, after state Auditor John Morrison. While Tester was seen as having a greater following among his fellow legislators and progressives, his opponent, whose grandfather was governor of Nebraska, was able to raise significantly more money and had greater statewide name recognition.

Morrison collected \$1.05 million as of the start of 2006, including \$409,241 in the last three months of 2005,<sup>[3]</sup> but "Morrison's advantages in fundraising and name identification have not translated into a lead in the polls,"<sup>[4]</sup> most of which showed the race exceedingly tight, some calling it a "deadlock" as of late May.<sup>[5]</sup> On May 31, 2006, Paul Richards, another candidate in the race, citing the closeness of the race, and his own position in the polls, threw his support to Jon Tester.<sup>[6]</sup>

On June 6, 2006, Tester won the Democratic primary by a margin of over 25 points, much larger than expected given the previous polling. Burns easily won the Republican primary. On election day, Tester received 198,302 votes versus 195,455 for Burns. Tester was declared the winner on Nov. 8, 2006.<sup>[7]</sup> <sup>[8]</sup>

## Senatorial appointments

On November 15, 2006, pending Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid announced Tester had received six committee appointments: (1) Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; (2) Energy and Natural Resources; (3) Homeland Security and Government Affairs; (4) Veterans Affairs; (5) Small Business and Entrepreneurship; and (6) Indian Affairs. Tester had specifically requested a spot on the energy committee.<sup>[9]</sup>

He was not seated on the Senate Appropriations Committee, one that Harry Reid said he would give to Tester "as soon as possible".<sup>[10]</sup>

## Notes

- <sup>^</sup> Kelly, Jamie. "Pearl Jammin' for a Senate seat" (<http://www.missoulian.com/articles/2005/07/22/entertainer/ent01.txt>), *Missoulian*, 2005.
- <sup>^</sup> Lowery, Courtney. "The 'Good Guy' Running for U.S. Senate" ([http://www.newwest.net/index.php/main/article/the\\_good\\_guy\\_running\\_for\\_us\\_senate/](http://www.newwest.net/index.php/main/article/the_good_guy_running_for_us_senate/)), *NewWest*, 28 August 2005.
- <sup>^</sup> Johnson, Charles S. "Burns' fundraising nears \$5 million; Morrison's hits \$1 million" (<http://www.billingsgazette.net/articles/2006/02/01/news/state/75-fundraising.txt>), *CQPolitics.com*, 28 August 2005.
- <sup>^</sup> Horrigan, Marie. "MT Senate: Race to Take On Embattled Burns Nears

visited on 4/5/2007

- Finish" ([http://www.cqpolitics.com/2006/05/mt\\_senate\\_race\\_to\\_take\\_on\\_emba.html](http://www.cqpolitics.com/2006/05/mt_senate_race_to_take_on_emba.html)), CQPolitics.com, 31 May 2006.
5. ^ Johnson, Charles S. "Tester, Morrison deadlocked" ([http://www.helenair.com/articles/2006/05/28/montana\\_top/a01052806\\_01.txt](http://www.helenair.com/articles/2006/05/28/montana_top/a01052806_01.txt)), *Helena Independent Record*, 28 May 2006
  6. ^ Dennison, Mike. "Richards: Tester is best choice" (<http://www.billingsgazette.net/articles/2006/05/31/news/state/25-richards-tester.txt>), *Billings Gazette*, 31 May 2006.
  7. ^ Jalonick, Mary Clare. "Playing Outsider, Tester Wins Mont. Seat" (<http://www.breitbart.com/news/2006/11/08/D8L91FRO1.html>), Associated Press, 8 November 2006
  8. ^ U.S. SENATE / MONTANA results (<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/MT/S/01/index.html>), CNN.com, November 2006.
  9. ^ "Montana Standard" (<http://www.mtstandard.com/articles/2006/11/15/newsstate/hjjdiiiejagfec.txt>)
  10. ^ "Billings Gazette" (<http://www.billingsgazette.net/articles/2006/11/17/news/state/80-misled.txt>)

## External links

- United States Senator Jon Tester (<http://tester.senate.gov/>) **official Senate site**
- Biography (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=t000464>) at the *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress*
- Federal Election Commission - Jon Tester ([http://herndon1.sdrdc.com/cgi-bin/can\\_detail/S6MT00162](http://herndon1.sdrdc.com/cgi-bin/can_detail/S6MT00162)) campaign finance reports and data
- On the Issues - Jon Tester ([http://www.ontheissues.org/Senate/Jon\\_Tester.htm](http://www.ontheissues.org/Senate/Jon_Tester.htm)) issue positions and quotes
- OpenSecrets.org - Jon Tester ([http://www.opensecrets.org/politicians/summary\\_newmems.asp?CID=N00027605](http://www.opensecrets.org/politicians/summary_newmems.asp?CID=N00027605)) campaign contributions
- Project Vote Smart - Senator Jon Tester (MT) ([http://www.vote-smart.org/bio.php?can\\_id=CMT56073](http://www.vote-smart.org/bio.php?can_id=CMT56073)) profile
- SourceWatch Congresspedia - Jon Tester ([http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Jon\\_Tester](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Jon_Tester)) profile
- Washington Post - Congress Votes Database: Jon Tester (<http://projects.washingtonpost.com/congress/members/t000464/>) voting record
- About.com - Jon Tester (<http://usliberals.about.com/od/2006ussenateraces/p/JonTester.htm>) profile
- Jon Tester U.S. Senator-Elect (<http://www.testersenate.com/>) **official campaign site**

## Articles

- "Montana Senator in Fight of Political Life," ([http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2006/10/15/burns\\_struggling\\_to\\_retain\\_mont\\_voters/](http://www.boston.com/news/nation/articles/2006/10/15/burns_struggling_to_retain_mont_voters/)) Associated Press, October 15, 2006
- Interview with Tester (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14468827/site/newsweek/>), Newsweek, August 22, 2006

Political offices		
Preceded by <b>Conrad Burns</b>	<b>United States Senator (Class 1) from Montana</b> 2007 – present Served alongside: <b>Max Baucus</b>	<b>Incumbent</b>

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ID: Craig (R), Crapo (R)	MO: Bond (R), McCaskill (D)	OR: Wyden (D), Smith (R)	WI: Kohl (D), Feingold (D)
IL: Durbin (D), Obama (D)			WY: Thomas (R), Enzi (R)

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