

# House candidate favors private sector

## ELECTION 2010

**BY RICHARD HANNERS**  
**Whitfish Pilot**

Derek Skees is one of three Republicans running in this year's House District 4 race. The incumbent, Mike Jopek, a Democrat, has withdrawn from the race for the Whitfish district.

Skees moved to the Flathead from Orlando, Fla., in 1982 and graduated from Columbia Falls High School four years later. He returned to Orlando, where he received an associate's degree and attended college for a while before leaving for "a good job with UPS."

He returned to the Flathead in 1998 and now works with R Porch Construction. He had worked in construction for his father, Dick Skees, while living in the Flathead.

Skees is a member of the Rotary Club in Whitfish, the Whitfish Assembly of God church and the Freedom

Action Rally, which together with American Dream

Montana has sponsored rallies opposed to county planning director Jeff Harris and county commissioner Joe Brememan.

He's also chairman of the Constitution Studies

Committee, which is currently teaching 26 people at the Perkins restaurant in Kalispell.

Skees says he wants to be a pro-jobs representative and make state government accountable to the people, especially in these tough economic times. He said his business has fallen by 80 percent, and he has learned to adjust — government needs to do the same.

"This is a momentous time for our republic," he said. "We need men and women of character in

Helena. We need people who sign their payroll checks on the front. We need to run



**Derek Skees**

Helena like a business and tighten our belts."

Skees expects the 2011 Legislature will be particularly contentious, so as a first step, he proposes the legislature go back to a prior budget year that matches projected revenues and then work from there to address real needs.

"The state's population has been relatively stable over the past decade, but the budget has increased 50 percent," he said.

Secondly, Skees says he wants to reduce taxes to create jobs. He proposes scrapping the business equipment tax entirely ("its effect is to

scare off new businesses"), privatize workman's compensation ("it needs to be competitive") and suspend gas and diesel taxes to help truckers during the recession.

"I want to put money in people's and businesses' hands so they can create jobs," he said.

He said he doesn't favor accepting federal stimulus money because it usually comes with "too many mandates attached."

"World War II got us out of the Great Depression," he said. "Government needs to get out of the private sector so it can fix itself."

Property taxes should be based on private appraisals rather than based on values set by government bureaucrats who earn more money if market-based valuations are high, he said.

The current system is unfair to property owners with recreational properties — especially along Whitfish Lake, he said. The system also gives too much power to the executive

branch.

"When the House tried to mitigate the effects of the new property valuation, the Department of Revenue and the Governor's Office just did whatever they wanted to do," he said. "That's taxation without representation."

Skees wants the state to take a stance against the new federal health care law, which he characterizes as "socialism."

"There's no such thing as free health care," he said. "There's not enough money. It's a redistribution of wealth."

Recognizing that Montana receives a great deal of federal funding, Skees proposes using states' powers invested in the U.S. Constitution's 10th Amendment to "nullify" the new health care law.

"Thirty-two other states are studying nullification," he said. "That's our way out of it."

Skees also wants to see Montana ease up on taxes and regulations in order to encourage more use of its

natural resources, including gas, oil and coal. He cites Wyoming as an example to follow.

But he wants to do so without harming the environment, which in turn would hurt tourism. So while he wants oil and gas development brought back to the Rocky Front, addressing coal development in the North Fork drainage "is a tricky question."

Skees, who is a member of the Tea Party movement, says he's really excited about the election. He sees an upwelling of discontent and a grassroots effort to change government.

He thanks the Obama administration for "drawing a line in the sand" so everyone can see the "slippery slope of Fabian Socialism" that could eventually lead to "totalitarianism."

"People are waking up," he said. "The apathy came from past prosperity, but that's changing with tougher times. People are starting to get more involved."

# Candidate wants manpower redistributed

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2009, there were more supervisors than deputies to mowing an "infill

"In an emergency, the search-and-rescue teams need to be fully prepared

held publicly responsible, including prosecution and termination when approval