





# Responses to Nikolakakos

**In the gritty world of Montana politics, some play dirty to cling to power—and George Nikolakakos just proved he’s willing to stoop as low as it gets.**

Forward by Marci Marceau

**G**eorge Nikolakakos has finally crawled out from under whatever rock he’s been hiding his high school behavior and hypocrisy beneath. Armed with nothing more than a handful of ancient, context-stripped social-media screenshots and the desperate hope that nobody remembers what a fraud he is.

Desperate to shield his preferred Democrat-RINO establishment crew and sabotage a true conservative challenger, George resorted to trolling through Kevin Leatherbarrow’s old social media posts, cherry-picking and twisting words out of context to smear him as “not a real Republican.” This isn’t debate; it’s the kind of sleazy, dishonest hit-job you’d expect from someone more interested in protecting his insider status than serving the people.

But let’s talk about George’s own record of betrayal. As the sponsor of HB 433—a strong pro-Second Amendment bill designed to protect the presumption of innocence and prevent the government from stripping firearm rights based on mere accusations—he begged for the chance to carry it. Then, when it came time to stand up for it, he turned on his own legislation: offering gutting amendments in committee that would have weakened its core protections, pushing those same destructive changes on the House floor, and when even those failed to derail it, he hypocritically asked that the bill he introduced be killed outright rather than let it pass in its intended form. That’s not leadership; that’s sabotage from within, the kind of backstabbing that keeps the swamp thriving.

Kevin Leatherbarrow, by contrast, is a straight-shooting warrior for truth, justice, and constitutional principles. He doesn’t twist words or hide behind selective outrage—he calls out corruption, abuse of power, and establishment sellouts wherever he sees them, no matter who it offends. In an era of spineless politicians

who bend to the status quo, Kevin stands tall, unafraid to challenge bloated government, protect individual rights, and demand real accountability.

What follows is Kevin’s clear, unfiltered response to George’s desperate attacks. Read it for yourself and see the difference: one man fights for the people; the other fights to keep the corrupt system intact.

And the story doesn’t end there. Kevin Leatherbarrow stepped up and filed to run directly against George Nikolakakos in a bold challenge to the status quo. Rather than face that fight head-on, George dropped out of that race and pivoted to challenge Randy Pinocci in Senate District 12. Randy Pinocci is a proven champion of Second Amendment rights in Montana—a lifetime member of the Montana Shooting Sports Association, a Benefactor Member of the NRA, and a tireless defender of our constitutional freedoms who has helped pass more pro-gun legislation than almost anyone else in the state. Unlike George, Randy doesn’t talk out of both sides of his mouth—he delivers results for gun owners, families, and freedom-loving Montanans.

If you value real conservative principles, strong Second Amendment protections, and leaders who actually fight for you instead of the establishment, support Randy Pinocci now. Donate to his campaign today, spread the word, and make sure to vote for him in the primary against George Nikolakakos. Randy deserves—and has earned—your vote and your support to keep Montana free!

**Now, turning directly to the heart of the matter:** Below are Kevin Leatherbarrow’s own powerful, straightforward answers to George Nikolakakos’s attacks and distortions. These responses lay bare the truth without spin or apology—exactly the kind of honesty Montana needs more of.

Kevin Leatherbarrow is proudly running for Montana House District 22 (HD 22) in the Republican primary on June 2, 2026, bringing that same fearless commitment to fighting corruption, defending our freedoms, championing school choice, eliminating property taxes where possible, and putting everyday Montanans over career politicians. He’s the real conservative warrior we need in

Helena—educated, principled, and unafraid to take on the establishment.

If you’re in HD 22 (or want to back a true fighter from anywhere in the state), step up now: Visit his campaign website at [kevinleatherbarrow.com](http://kevinleatherbarrow.com) to learn more, donate directly to fuel his run, and follow him on Facebook at [facebook.com/LeatherbarrowMTEd](http://facebook.com/LeatherbarrowMTEd) for updates. Every dollar and every vote counts—make yours count for Kevin Leatherbarrow. Vote for him in the primary and help send a message that Montana is done with the swamp games!

Below is HD 22 Candidate **Kevin Leatherbarrow’s** response to the sniveling, self-sabotaging bill killer, bottom-feeder George Nikolakakos.

*George, I appreciate the follow-up. It is always a healthy sign for a republic when citizens stop accepting government narratives at face value and start asking difficult questions. To suggest that questioning authority is “anti-American” is to fundamentally misunderstand the founding of this country. True patriotism is not blind obedience; it is the courage to challenge a bloated and corrupt status quo. Here are the answers to your questions: On Law Enforcement and Sheriff Slaughter I have never “attacked” the concept of law enforcement; I have attacked the abuse of power. Comparing certain modern practices to tyranny isn’t an insult to the badge—it’s a warning to those who wear it. When we see a “good old boy club” protecting corruption in Cascade County, including serious scandals like feeding inmates contaminated food and overseeing preventable, unlawful deaths, silence is complicit. A sheriff who looks the other way is a crooked sheriff, and I will not “disavow” the sentiment that corruption must be purged. On Public Safety and the FBI It is a documented legal reality (and a common-sense one) that the government has no constitutional duty to protect you at an individual level. Self-governance starts with the individual’s right to self-defense. Regarding the FBI: when an agency becomes more interested in political optics and bureaucratic bloat than in objective justice, it has outlived its merit. Abolishing corrupt, federalized entities in favor of localized, accountable systems is a return to constitutional principles. On Donald Trump I judge a leader by their actions and the company they keep. Donald Trump*

(continued on page 3A)

# VOTE JUNE 2ND

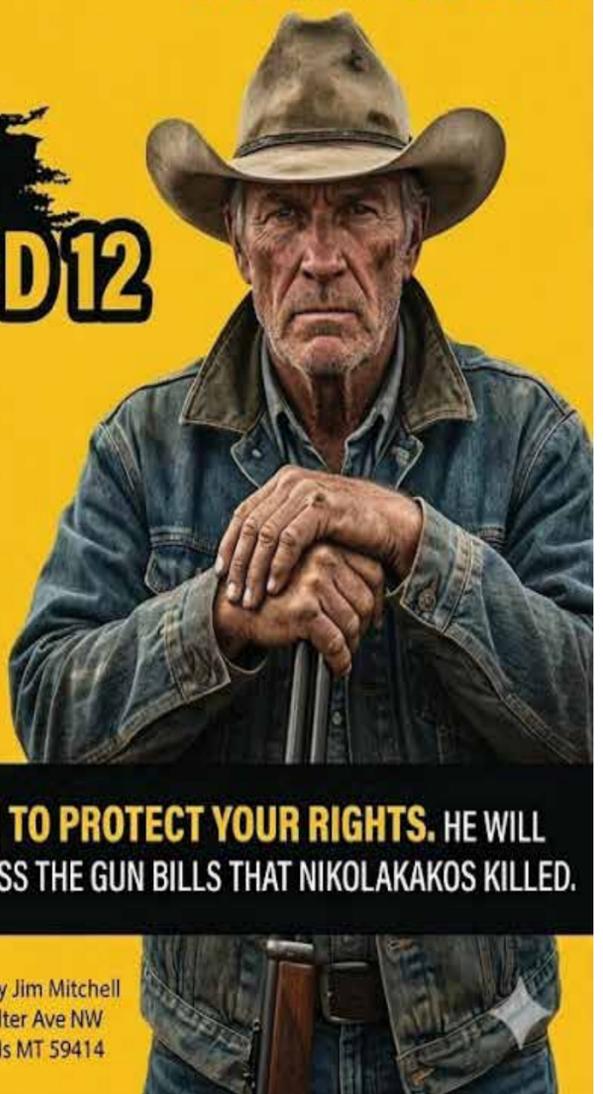
#VotePinocci

**EVERY GUN OWNER HAS TO REGISTER TO VOTE FOR RANDY PINOCCI for SD12**

- RANDY PINOCCI IS AN ‘A’ RATED 2ND AMENDMENT CHAMPION.
- HE IS RUNNING AGAINST THE MOST ANTI-GUN REPUBLICAN LEGISLATOR, **GEORGE NIKOLAKAKOS**.
- NIKOLAKAKOS BETRAYED OUR TRUST AND INTENTIONALLY KILLED THE MSSA’S GUN BILL THAT HE BEGGED TO SPONSOR.

**VOTE PINOCCI TO PROTECT YOUR RIGHTS. HE WILL SPONSOR AND PASS THE GUN BILLS THAT NIKOLAKAKOS KILLED.**

Paid for by Jim Mitchell  
300 Smelter Ave NW  
Great Falls MT 59414









**BUTTREY (from page 4A)**

CEO making nearly half a million dollars a year. He is a local business owner who knows that government spending is out of control.

Galloway is endorsed by current Senator Emrich who has served with him in the past, says he will not sacrifice your freedom at the alter of a corporate payout

Galloway stands for:

- Real Fiscal Discipline: He aligns with the Montana Freedom Caucus to stop the “budget explosion” and protect your pocketbook.
- Montana Sovereignty: He believes Montana should stop taking federal bribes that come with unconstitutional strings attached.

- True Representation: Galloway answers to you, not a hospital board.

**THE BOTTOM LINE:** Ed Buttrey is getting rich off the system while you pay the price. It is time to stop the “CEO-Lobbyist-Legislator” and vote for someone who puts the people first. **On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, vote Steven Galloway.** 🗳️

**WASTE (from page 1A)**

waste district assessment is not optional. It is a mandatory property assessment tied to land ownership within the district.

**The Process Used for the Fee Increase That Sparked Debate**

In 2024, Cascade County Commissioners knew special district assessments had to be addressed and most likely increased, since the rural solid waste district assessment had not been increased since 2012. The fund had previously fallen into the ‘red’ in June of 2020 and again in June of 2024.

On September 5, 2024, the Cascade County Commissioners adopted the County FY25 budget by Resolution 24-37 with a vote of 2 to 1. After public scrutiny, the Commission held a meeting on September 19, 2024 for action on Resolution 24-39 to increase the solid waste district assessment by 45%. No public hearing was listed and supporting documents were not provided to the public in accordance with law.

Residents raised several concerns during meetings and public discussions, including the size of the increase and the lack of financial justification for the change and claims of unlawful meeting and public hearing processes.

**Legal Challenge Filed**

A petition requesting the court to halt the increase, review the county’s actions and to determine whether the process used to approve the assessment was proper and lawful, was filed on November 3, 2024 in the Eighth Judicial District Court in Great Falls. Judge Elizabeth Best presided over the decision.

A motion for an expedited hearing was filed the same day in an effort to stop the increase before the tax bills were mailed out. Tax bills had already been delayed by a month, awaiting meetings regarding decisions on the Rural Solid Waste Assessment increase. In less than 4 hours Judge Best pretentiously reviewed the submission and denied the request for an injunction, concluding the claims did not merit the relief requested. Because of that ruling the assessment increase was allowed to proceed and the legal challenge was closed at the district court level.

**Appeal to the Montana Supreme Court**

On February 26, 2025, the case was then appealed to the Montana Supreme Court under Case #DA-25-0163. The appeal asked the Supreme Court to review the district court’s decision regarding the challenge to the solid waste assessment increase. The Supreme Court reviewed the appeal following the lower court’s denial of the claims, and on December 16, 2025 ruled to ‘reverse and remand’ the case back to the Eighth Judicial District Court in Great Falls where a hearing is yet to be set.

Two years after the debate began, many Cascade County residents say the central issues remain unresolved. Did the public receive a clear and complete explanation of the solid waste district’s finances before the assessment increase was approved?

What began as a proposal to increase rural solid waste assessments has evolved into a broader controversy involving public trust, financial transparency, and litigation that reached the Montana Supreme Court.

**Citizens Speak Out**

Many residents voiced concerns. One Cascade County citizen made comment at a meeting stating, “I wish they would listen to us.”

Another resident warned of unintended consequences; “Increasing the cost for dumping will cause some illegal dumping. We’re already seeing it.”

Commissioner Grulkowski was quoted during the September 19 meeting stating; “I would rather keep the rates the same while we address concerns that have been brought forward — the Republic charges, the dumping of non-household waste, operations at the dump sites,



Vacated Belt Transfer Site

and questions about the punch-card system.”

**The Belt Dumpsite Crisis**

At the same time, rural residents were dealing with the sudden closure of the Belt/Armington dumpsite after lease negotiations broke down. In December 2024, County Commissioners issued a press release falsely accusing the landowner for the breakdown stating, “The Board of Cascade County Commissioners strongly condemns Rimrock Valley Preserve, LLC for blocking community access to the Belt/Armington dumpsite.”

Residents reported arriving to find the site closed after several warnings from the landowner to the county about the closure as the contract was in arrears. There was no response to the landowner’s attempts to negotiate by county officials.

**Loans, Construction, and Ongoing Questions**

After months of hauling waste to distant disposal sites following the 2024 closure of the Belt-area container location, Cascade County officials moved in March 2025 to establish a new waste transfer site. County commissioners approved a lease agreement for property adjacent to the former Belt facility, where a replacement container site would be constructed, directly across the fence from the vacated facility.

Initial construction estimates presented at the time, to develop a ramp for container access, ranged from approximately \$100,000 to \$190,000. During the same meeting, commissioners also approved a resolution authorizing the pursuit of a loan of up to \$300,000 to support ongoing solid waste operations.

The decision prompted questions from some taxpayers. In 2024, the Rural Solid Waste District had already implemented an assessment increase expected to generate additional revenue. Critics questioned why additional borrowing was necessary so soon after that increase, raising concerns about long-term financial planning and transparency.

Subsequent cost estimates appear to have escalated. According to a May 16, 2025 Action Report from the county Public Works Department, sealed bids for construction of the new facility ranged from \$169,888 to \$239,996. These figures did not include engineering, testing, or certain materials such as concrete blocks, which would be supplied separately by the county. Factoring in those additional costs, the total project estimate quickly approached \$300,000.

The report also noted a potential long-term concern; the proposed structure would be built on leased land, placing the county in a position where it could be required to relocate the facility in the future.

As an alternative, Public Works Director Les Payne reported that purchasing the former Belt container site—previously vacated in 2024—could provide a more cost-effective solution. According to public comment made in meetings between 2024 and 2025, the public, at that time, agreed. Two years later, it would seem improbable there is any gain in taxpayer funding savings or taxpayer trust in leadership decision-making processes.

**The 2025 Commercial Rate Increase and Notice Concerns**

In September, 2025, the issue of solid waste funding resurfaced with a proposed increase to commercial rates, and an effort to establish a process for protesting solid waste assessments.

Resolution of Intent #25-59, reverted back to repealed law and referenced an obscure statute passed in 2019. County Commissioners, referring to repealed law 7-13-208 (2007), failed to list the complete statute in Resolution of Intent #25-59 and failed to actually put it into practice. Missing from the document was MCA 7-13-208, part 3, which reads, “A copy of the notice must be mailed as provided in 7-1-2122 to every person, firm, or corporation having real property within the proposed district listed upon the last-completed assessment list for county taxes the same day the notice is first published.”

The chosen repealed law requires that notice of such hearings be both published and mailed to affected property owners on the same day. A small, informal survey of five commercial businesses within the district indicated that none reported receiving mailed notice of the September 15, 2025 hearing prior to the rate increase. The Commission failed to follow statutory notice requirements, using repealed law, for the 2025 commercial assessment.

Resolution #25-69 adopted the new rules for protest and the commercial rate increases of 2025.

**Unresolved Taxpayer Protests**

8 county taxpayers protested the 2024 assessment increase of 45%. To date, these taxpayers have not received formal hearings or resolutions to their appeals. One individual has submitted written requests to both the county commission and the county treasurer seeking clarification on the status of protested funds and inquiries have still received no response. Are the protested funds truly being held in a protest account by the county? How are disputed assessment revenues being managed?

**The Issue Returns in 2026**

In January 2026, commissioners approved an \$800 appraisal related to the previously vacated Belt waste transfer site. On this vacated Belt site still remains a structure owned by the county taxpayer. Similar to an earlier appraisal conducted in 2025 for the Stockett waste transfer site, it was determined that comparable market sales were not available and the county instead relied on Montana Department of Revenue taxable values for the Stockett waste transfer site, to establish a price for the Belt transfer site.

On March 24, 2026, Contract #26-22 was approved, purchasing 3 acres of the previously vacated Belt waste site for \$122,854.83.

Regarding the Cascade County Rural Solid Waste District’s events in the past 2 years, the county taxpayer has incurred the expense of the development and remediation of the leased land, additional miles traveled to dump their trash and compromised safety of citizens who threw bags of trash over 6’ container walls and drove on icy highways to discard their trash, and a deepening lack of confidence in county leadership’s ability to manage these issues.

In the same March 2026 meeting county Public Works Director, Les Payne, stated that, “purchasing the old Belt transfer site for a total cost of \$122,854.83, *saves* the taxpayers up to approximately \$177,145.17.”

After two years of structural developments and short-sighted management decisions, any taxpayer savings in the Cascade County Rural Solid Waste District remain unclear.

Continue to participate in your Cascade County Commissioner meetings and stay in touch with any further discussions regarding your Cascade County Rural Solid Waste District at [www.cascadecountymt.gov](http://www.cascadecountymt.gov). 🗳️



# Montana's Rotten Core

## If You Truly Want to Fix This Broken System, Show Up and Vote on June 2nd

By Staff Writer

Montana's political system is rotten to the core—and it has been since the days of the Copper Kings. From Senator Steve Daines and Congressman Ryan Zinke dropping out of their races at the last minute and hand-picking their own successors, to state-level legislators quietly enriching themselves at taxpayer expense, the pattern is unmistakable. This isn't a few isolated scandals or a handful of bad actors. It is a deeply entrenched network of career politicians, unelected bureaucrats, lobbyists, compliant judges, law enforcement insiders, and media gatekeepers who function as a self-protecting "Good Old Boy Club"—or, if you prefer, the uniparty, the swamp. Call it whatever you like; the behavior is identical. They put their own power, insider deals, and special-interest payoffs ahead of the everyday needs of working Montanans. Elections have become little more than theater: no matter who wins the marquee races, the outcome stays the same—more debt, more control from Helena and Washington, and a steady erosion of our freedoms and state sovereignty.

Montanans, it is time to wake up. You are being played.

Too many candidates talk a good game about conservatism—lowering property taxes, protecting our rights, defending the Montana Way—while knowing full well that most voters will never dig into their records. George and Melissa Nikolakakos, Ed Buttrey, and others like them have mastered the art of sounding principled on the stump while remaining intricately tied to the very grift they claim to oppose. They are not outsiders; they are products of the system, and the system protects its own. That is why real change never materializes.

If we are serious about dismantling this corrupt machine, we must stop rubber-stamping hand-picked successors. We have to do something different. Those of us who can, must step up and run for office—not as a new career, but as a temporary act of service to our neighbors and our state. For everyone else, the path is just as clear: donate to principled campaigns, volunteer to knock doors, make phone calls, and—most importantly—show up at the polls.

June 2nd is not just another primary. It is our best, and perhaps last, realistic chance this cycle to begin breaking the grip of the entrenched insiders. That is why candidates like Randy Pinocci for Senate District 12,

Tony Rosales, Mindy Kahle for Cascade County Sheriff, Kevin Leatherbarrow, Jessica Dyrdaahl for Senate District 10, Rick Wolke for Cascade County Commissioner, and Deserae Valentine for Cascade Clerk and Recorder deserve your support. These are not polished careerists looking for a stepping stone. They are Montanans willing to take on the entire rigged system for the sake of the people who have been crushed under the weight of bloated, unresponsive government.

They will not fix everything overnight. No single election ever does. But if enough of us reject the hand-picked successors, support the true reformers, and refuse to keep rewarding the same failed club, we can begin the long, overdue process of reclaiming our state.

The Copper Kings are gone, but their spirit of self-dealing lives on in Helena. The only way to bury it for good is to stop voting for its modern heirs. If you are tired of being played, if you actually want to fix this broken system instead of just complaining about it, clear your calendar for June 2nd and vote like your children's freedom depends on it—because it does.

**Montana is worth it. Show up and vote June 2nd.** 🗳️

# All Hat, No Cattle

## Slaughter Claims 'Constitutional Sheriff' Title, But Las Vegas, NV and Riverside, CA County Sheriffs Actually Live It

Op-Ed by Linda Madsen

In a stunning display of courage that echoes centuries of righteous resistance, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and Sheriff Kevin McMahill are standing firm against a local judge's order to free a dangerous repeat offender — and in doing so, they are putting the ancient Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates into powerful practice.

Thirty-six-year-old Joshua Sanchez-Lopez, already convicted of rape and involuntary manslaughter and carrying a staggering 35 arrests, was ordered released by Las Vegas Justice Court Judge Eric Goodman on electronic monitoring after posting bail on a grand larceny charge. Sanchez-Lopez has a documented history of skipping court dates and openly mocking the ankle monitor program — even posting selfies on Snapchat while under supervision.

Metro police told the court on January 29 they would not comply. Assistant General Counsel Mike Dickerson made the department's position crystal clear: "Sheriff McMahill will not violate the law to appease the Las Vegas Justice Court and let out people who he deems to be dangerous... lives are on the line."

Judge Goodman responded by threatening to hold Metro officers in contempt. The suspect's public defender called the refusal an attack on the "rule of law." But Nevada Governor Joe Lombardo immediately backed the sheriff: "When repeat violent offenders are ordered back onto our streets, law enforcement has a duty to speak up and push back."

This is not defiance for defiance's sake. This is the Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates in action — and it is precisely what a constitutional sheriff looks like when he takes his oath seriously.

A constitutional sheriff is an elected county official who understands he is not a mere enforcer of every edict from judges, governors, or Washington, but the chief law enforcement authority in his jurisdiction. His primary allegiance is to the U.S. Constitution, natural rights, and God's higher law — not blind obedience to any "higher" authority. This concept flows directly from the Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates: when a judge or higher power issues an order that endangers the innocent or violates eternal principles (like protecting life and community safety), the sheriff has a sacred duty to interpose, refuse enforcement, and shield the people. Sheriffs who live this out are the frontline defenders against a judicial system that has lost its moral compass.

Sheriff McMahill is embodying that role right now. By refusing to release a known violent threat, he is doing what constitutional sheriffs across America were elected to do.

**Riverside County, California, Sheriff Chad Bianco is doing the same.** In March 2026, Bianco seized more than 650,000 ballots from the November election as part of an investigation into potential discrepancies in the county's vote count for Proposition 50. He ordered a physical recount of the ballots to compare them against the recorded totals, stating, "There is no acceptable error, small or large, in our elections," and "This investigation is simple: Physically count the ballots and compare that result with the total votes recorded." Despite opposition from California Attorney General Rob Bonta and Secretary of State Shirley Weber—who

called the move "unprecedented," "unacceptable," and a danger to public trust—Bianco pressed forward, refusing to cooperate fully with state demands and highlighting how higher officials were attempting to block the probe. This is textbook interposition: a sheriff asserting local authority to protect election integrity and the people's right to honest elections against state-level resistance.

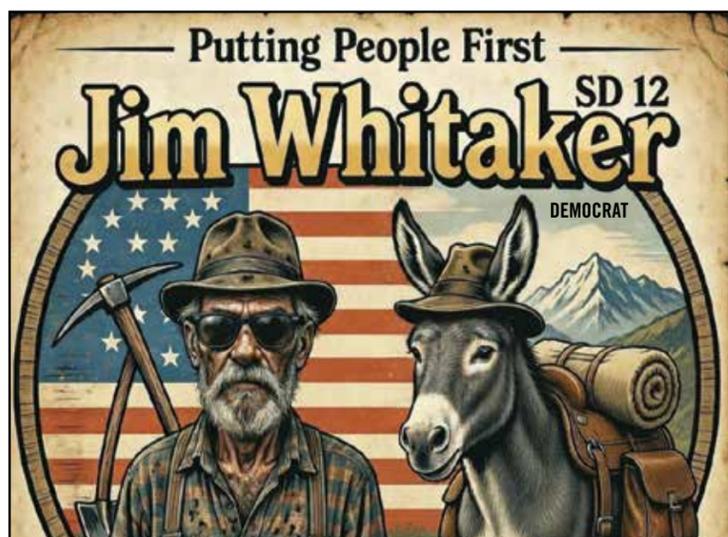
Tragically, not every sheriff who claims the "constitutional sheriff" title lives up to it in action. Unlike some self-identified "constitutional sheriffs" who assert the right to refuse enforcement of judicial orders they view as infringing on constitutional rights—such as certain pandemic mandates—Cascade County Sheriff Jesse Slaughter's record reveals the opposite that stands in sharp contrast to the accountability and courage shown in Las Vegas.

Sheriff Slaughter grumbled about enforcing mask mandates, but made sure his deputies enforced them. In 2020, when a visiting judge held a man in contempt for refusing to wear a mask in a court setting and ordered his arrest, Slaughter's deputy (acting as bailiff) carried out the arrest and jailing. In response to a subsequent letter from three local district judges reminding Sheriff Slaughter of his duty to enforce court orders and uphold their authority in the courtroom, Slaughter affirmed his respect for the judges, stated that his deputies were already complying and would continue to do so, and emphasized that he takes his responsibility to carry out their orders seriously—even when he personally disagrees with them. This stance prioritizes adherence to judicial directives over resistance, distinguishing him from the true constitutional sheriff model that might involve nullifying or defying such orders.

While Las Vegas County Sheriff McMahill interposes against a judge's reckless release order to protect the public, Sheriff Slaughter has repeatedly failed to interpose — even when his own department's actions violated constitutional standards and endangered lives. Slaughter's department aggressively enforced a judge-issued search warrant for animal cruelty violations at 77 Wexford Lane. The warrant stemmed from Pam Polejewski purchasing cat food and kitty litter — items she delivered to Michael Hanson, who lived on the property she owned but did not reside at full-time.

The only recording of the fatal confrontation is an 89-second audio captured on Detective Jacob Tri's cellphone. Independent audio analysis by the Cascade County Libertarian Party and the Montana Citizens Council on Judicial Accountability proves Tri fired his Glock first and then again after clearing a malfunction that

(continued on page 10A)



**VOTE JUNE 2ND**

**JIM WHITAKER for SD 12**

**PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST**

*I understand issues with affordability.*

**DONATIONS UNDER \$49 WELCOME**

I ask you send checks for no more than \$49 to support my campaign so you can keep the rest in your own pocket.



# What Are YOU All About?

By Leslie Mills

As the State of Montana moves into the 2026 Primary Election season, making informed decisions about voting is front and center. Voting is not only the right of citizens but also a very serious responsibility. Choosing individuals who will serve in government to represent us well is critical to maintaining our cities, counties, states, and ultimately, our nation.

A voter needs to consider the candidates running for office much like an employer gets to know prospective employees for hire. Getting to know candidates in this frame of mind would make conversations and debates with “Question and Answer” opportunities much like an interview. Reading about candidates and reviewing their voting records is akin to reading a resumé. Both in-person interaction and written knowledge can round out what we know about candidates. The most difficult task is cutting through the political rhetoric to the true nature of a candidate. We all have felt the sting of voting for a candidate who did not do as promised due to a lack of character or felt just as employers feel the sting of hiring someone who was not what they claimed to be. Underlying this quest to understand political candidates is truly the concept that “they work for us,” and as such they have a responsibility not only to their constituents, but to the entire population of their community, county, and state. It’s quite the interview!

To look at candidates as they present themselves in both word and deed, there are two “lenses” with which to view them. One is determining the true nature of a candidate’s party affiliation. The second is to determine the candidate’s political ideology. In Montana, candidates can identify with any party at any time at will. As you will see, this self-identification can be problematic.

There is a marked difference between party affiliation (Republican vs. Democrat) and political ideologies (Conservative vs. Liberal). While Republicans are usually considered conservative and Democrats usually considered liberal, there is a broad spectrum of combinations of Ideology + Party. Because a candidate can self-identify as “Republican” or “Democrat”, in theory we could have liberal Republicans and Democrats identifying as Constitutional Conservatives, Republicans, etc.

To get through all of this, voters need to know the candidate well. It is important to know the values and beliefs of candidates who want our votes to know they will represent us properly. It is also critical for voters to understand their own values and beliefs. Finding this match – what a voter cherishes to what a candidate will champion – is of utmost importance to the voter. But if you do not know your candidate, or if a candidate does not match your beliefs, electing that unknown candidate may lead to great disappointment for both.

There is a marked difference between political ideologies (Conservative vs. Liberal) and Party Affiliation (Republican vs. Democrat). While Republicans are usually considered Conservative and Democrats usually considered Liberal, there is a wide spectrum of combinations of Ideology + Party. Thus, in theory, we could have “Liberal Republicans” and “Conservative Democrats”. Understanding what it means to be a “Conservative” or “Liberal” is charted below. A candidate can identify as either Party at will in Montana. The only way to know what you are voting for is to **know your candidate’s ideology and not just the “R” or “D” after their name on a ballot.**

LIBERAL	CONSERVATIVE
Larger government through regulations	Limited government in our lives
Increased Taxes	Lower Taxes
Socialistic redistribution of wealth	Capitalist free markets
Unconstitutional Legislation	Follow the Constitution
Increased “green” legislation disregarding economic impact	Limiting economic destruction from the “green” movement
Limiting energy independence with “green” regulations	Energy independence for the safety and economy of the country
Open national borders	Safe and secure borders
Subsidizing illegal immigration with “government funded” housing, education, and health care	Managing thoughtful immigration for the benefit of the country
Voting rights for non-citizens	Voting is a right of US Citizens
Limiting & monitoring 1st Amendment (Free Speech)	Protecting 1st Amendment (Free Speech)
Limiting the right to bear arms (2nd Amendment) through regulation	Protecting the right to bear arms (2nd Amendment)
State funded abortion at any age and any time during pregnancy	Pro-Life beliefs
Preference for Globalist ideology and policies, including open borders	US sovereignty with right of unilateral action

**What gives the “Left” meaning in life?**

1. Family and children (52%)
2. Friends/Community/relationships (23%)
3. Material wellbeing/stability/quality of life (21%)
4. Occupation & Career (19%)
5. Physical and mental health (13% tie)
6. Hobbies and recreation (13% tie)

**What gives the “Right” meaning in life?**

1. Family and children (49%)
2. Spirituality, Faith, & Religion (23%)
3. Friends/Community/relationships (20%)
4. Material wellbeing/stability/quality of life (17%)
5. Occupation & Career (17%)
6. Society, places and Institutions (10%)

**What is the difference between political ideology and political party?**

A Party is defined as “an established political group organized to promote and support its principles and candidates for office.” In the United States and Montana, the two main parties are generally known for the following:

- Republicans – limited free-market capitalism, traditional social values emphasizing individual liberty, gun rights and a strong national defense
- Democrats – support a more active federal government to promote social equality, economic regulation, environmental protection, and social safety nets

As stated above, parties are not ideology. An ideology is a set of doctrines or beliefs that are shared by the members of a social group – i.e. Republicans are usually considered more conservative, Democrats are usually considered more liberal. There can be a wide difference of combinations of party and ideology, arriving at even ultra-conservative Republicans and ultra-liberal Democrats, with moderates on both sides.

**So, how does one know?**

What are core values and characteristics of the ideologies of conservative versus liberal?

To help with your understanding of what it means to be “conservative” or “liberal” please review the chart in Figure 1 that gives generally accepted information about both ideologies. Note: the arrows indicate the range of differences between the two ideologies.

This information is generalized, but it can help to determine where a candidate might be placed in the spectrum. It can also help you determine where you stand as well.

Looking at this chart, what are you all about? Where do you fit into these areas, keeping in mind the vast arrangement of these beliefs. For example:

Second Amendment: Do you fully support the supremacy of this right as constitutional, or do you think limits should be imposed?

Taxation: Are you for lowering and/or eliminating taxes or are you more inclined to tax and spend for social programs?

These kinds of beliefs and values are very individual and personal. But it helps to know yourself and your candidates for them to get your individual and personal vote.

As you consider where you stand on these

\_\_\_\_\_ (continued on page 8A)

## Voters of Cascade County: Lynn DeRoche’s Underhanded Record Should Disqualify Her from Clerk & Recorder

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

Lynn DeRoche is now running for Cascade County Clerk & Recorder. Voters deserve to know exactly who she is — and what she has already done while working inside the election office.

In the 2023 Fort Shaw Irrigation District election, DeRoche deliberately helped engineer a scheme that disenfranchised hundreds of legitimate voters and favored Commissioner Kennard Steinke. Court documents in the ongoing lawsuit (ADV-23-255) lay it out clearly:

She sent an email falsely telling the election administrator that co-owners of property “must” submit new voting designations—even though the law changed in 2019 and no such requirement existed (Mont. Code Ann. § 85-7-1710).

She and FSID secretary Charla Merja privately agreed to “bury” prior valid designations that were already on file and to tell voters they “MUST” file brand-new forms or they would not receive ballots.

They used outdated 2017 statutory language in the voter notice and refused ballots to co-owners who followed the actual law.

The result: at least 3,422 legitimate votes from co-owners were blocked. The chaos directly helped Commissioner Kennard Steinke win re-election.

This wasn’t a mistake. The emails and timeline in the court brief show it was coordinated and intentional. DeRoche and others created confusion, ignored the current law, and shorted votes to favor Steinke.

Today the Clerk & Recorder no longer runs elections — but the office still handles critical public records, voter registration support, and official documents that affect every citizen. If Lynn DeRoche was willing to bury records, mislead voters, and manipulate an election to help her preferred candidate when she was just an employee, what will she do when she has the top job?

Cascade County voters have a right to know this history before they cast their ballots. Underhanded tactics have no place in public office.

**On June 2nd, vote for Deserae Valentine for Cascade County Clerk & Recorder — the candidate who will actually protect our elections and our rights.**

Sally Tucker Cascade County



# The Power of County Central Committees

By Rae Grulkowski

Most people think the most important choices on the June Primary Ballot are the big races - the ones for president, governor, or legislators. But every even-numbered year, in the Montana June Primary, the most powerful positions in local politics are the Precinct Committeemen and Committeewomen.

In Montana, each political party operates through a County Central Committee. This committee directs party activities within the county in addition to helping shape the direction of the party at the state and national level. A small appointed board helps manage the committee, and four board positions represent the county at state and national conventions where they vote on party leadership, party rules, and party platforms.

But here's what many voters don't realize . . . the real voting power inside the County Central Committee, therefore the political party, belongs to ordinary citizens elected from each precinct.

Cascade County has 26 precincts and every precinct in the county elects two people:

- A Precinct Committeeman
- A Precinct Committeewoman

Those positions only appear on the June Primary ballot in even numbered years. These grassroots representatives make up the County Central Committee, and they are the ones who actually vote on decisions that affect the direction of their party locally and beyond. Unless a board member also holds a precinct seat, they don't even get a vote.

That means the people who carry real influence in party decisions are not party insiders - they are neighbors elected from your precinct. And their influence goes even further. When an elected official leaves office early, whether it's an elected county position or a legislative seat, the replacement is not chosen out of thin air. The County Commissioners make the appointment, but they must choose from candidates put forward by the County Central Committee.

In other words, the precinct committeemen and committeewomen help determine who is even considered for important public offices. That's real influence!

Yet every even-numbered year election cycle many of these positions go unnoticed on the ballot, and sometimes they go unfilled. When that happens, a small number of people end up making decisions that affect thousands.

**The June 2, 2026 Primary is your chance to change that.**

Pay attention to the precinct committee races on your ballot. Learn who is running. Support people who reflect your values. And if your precinct seat is open, consider putting your own name forward. These positions are one of the most direct ways citizens can participate in shaping their party and their community. Local government and political parties are strongest when citizens show up.

**Mark your Calendar for June 2, 2026  
Vote the Primary Ballot  
Encourage Your Friends and Neighbors To Do the Same**

The people who run for the smallest level of governance, at the precinct level, often end up shaping the biggest decisions. 🗳️

## VOTE JUNE 2

# Rick Wolke for Cascade County Commission

In local government, results matter more than titles. The job of a county commissioner is part problem-solver, part manager, and part listener. It requires someone who understands budgets, people, and how decisions affect everyday citizens. Those who know Rick Wolke say his life's work has prepared him well for exactly that role.

Wolke grew up in Great Falls, where the values common to this region—hard work, persistence, and accountability—were instilled early. Summers spent working on his grandparents' mink farm in Fairfield taught lessons that translate directly into public service: long days, practical problem-solving, and the expectation that when something needs to be done, you simply get it done.

Those principles carried into his early leadership experiences. While attending Great Falls High School, Wolke gravitated toward auto shop, eventually serving as the teacher's aide during his senior year. The role required helping other students, organizing work, and keeping projects moving forward—skills that mirror the collaborative nature of county government.

After graduation, Wolke spent several years working as a mechanic and machinist in Chinook, developing hands-on technical skills and learning the realities of working people and small communities. That background would later shape how he approaches management and decision-making.

His professional career soon expanded when Auto Glass Specialists hired him to open and manage a new location in Missoula. Opening a business from the ground up requires many of the same abilities expected of public officials: organizing resources, building a team, serving customers, and staying accountable for results.

His success caught the attention of Safelite AutoGlass, a rapidly growing national company at the time. Wolke was recruited to help manage expansion, assist struggling locations, open new stores, and handle acquisitions. It was demanding work that required strategic thinking and steady leadership—so much so that one corporate official jokingly



nicknamed him the "Dragon Slayer" for his ability to step into difficult situations and turn them around.

Later, Wolke started and operated his own glass company for several years before selling it to a national chain, as the industry had changed. Entrepreneurship gave him firsthand experience with payroll, regulation, customer service, and risk.

Rather than simply retire, he returned to his roots and opened a one-man shop building high-performance engines for Harley-Davidson motorcycles. His engines went on to set multiple race track records across the western United States. The work required precision, patience, and a commitment to doing things right—qualities that carry over naturally into public office.

Eventually Wolke moved into dealership service management, helping lead operations at several dealerships and tackling the challenges that come with large teams, tight budgets, and customer expectations. Managing service departments means solving problems quickly, keeping people working together, and making sure resources are used wisely.

After decades of working across different communities and industries, Wolke returned home to Great Falls about five years ago. Friends often asked why he had never stepped into politics. For most of his life, he had been more interested in doing the work than seeking an office. But being back in the community that shaped him led to a new thought: perhaps his experience could be put to use serving the county.

The role of a county commissioner requires someone who can evaluate problems, manage organizations, and make practical decisions for taxpayers. Supporters argue Wolke has spent a lifetime doing exactly that—leading teams, fixing complicated situations, building businesses, and understanding the needs of working people.

Cascade County faces real issues that require practical leadership. If elected, Rick Wolke's approach would likely reflect the same lessons he learned long ago: work hard, solve the problem in front of you, and don't let the people who depend on you down.

Support Rick Wolke as your next Cascade County Commissioner. Learn more at:



**RICKWOLKEFORCOUNTYCOMMISSIONER.COM**

Have questions for Rick? Email him at [rickwolkeforcascadecounty@gmail.com](mailto:rickwolkeforcascadecounty@gmail.com)

Paid for by Rick Wolke for County Commissioner, (R), PO box 6122, Great Falls, Mt, 59405

This is going to be a tough race, every donation counts.



### WHAT ARE YOU ALL ABOUT (from page 7A)

values and issues, how do you know where a candidate truly stands on them to earn your vote? Some suggestions to truly nail down where a candidate stands include:

Read! Carefully consider the source of your reading. Select wisely what you read and know the Constitution and *your rights*. Read about the Framers of this Nation. What values and beliefs did they use as a foundation for what they intended to support life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Develop your own "Patriot Library" and share it with others.

Become an active, participating citizen by attending civic meetings to learn the issues and where you stand on them. Voice Your Opinion! Ask questions! Be Present. Be Vocal.

Join groups to talk with like-minded people. Pachyderm Club is a wonderful place to begin

as it is considered the educational branch of the Republican Party. Turning Point USA looks deeply into the founding of the country to help build on understanding of what was intended by the Founders. Go meet with and listen to speakers. Ask questions and get answers.

### The Bottom Line

Do NOT take your voting right for granted and "just vote." The saying, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything" has truth to it. Know what you stand for!

Taking the time to learn about the candidates by party affiliation and political ideology informs voters' decisions at the polls and empowers voters in forming our government. The more information voters have, the more deliberate and meaningful their votes become.

Every citizen is responsible for knowing the candidate they are voting for beyond simple

name recognition or "*the letter behind the name*" on a ballot. Voters need to know what makes a candidate "tick". Be "in the know" to find your Champion.

As voters become more responsible, follow up on those who were elected to be *accountable* to their campaign promises must be done. Nothing compares to keeping our representatives in government accountable to "We the People".

And remember, as you "interview" candidates for the job of representing you, **they work for US**. If we are happy with their work on our behalf, they may keep their office. But, if they are not doing their job and losing sight of the promises they made, we have the right to tell them so and, if necessary, *remove them* from office.

Stay in the know, because, as Sir Francis Bacon said, "*Knowledge is Power!*" 🗳️



# Support These Candidates for Republican Precinct Committee Representatives in Cascade County

**VOTE the Primary Ballot June 2, 2026** – the most important election of the year.

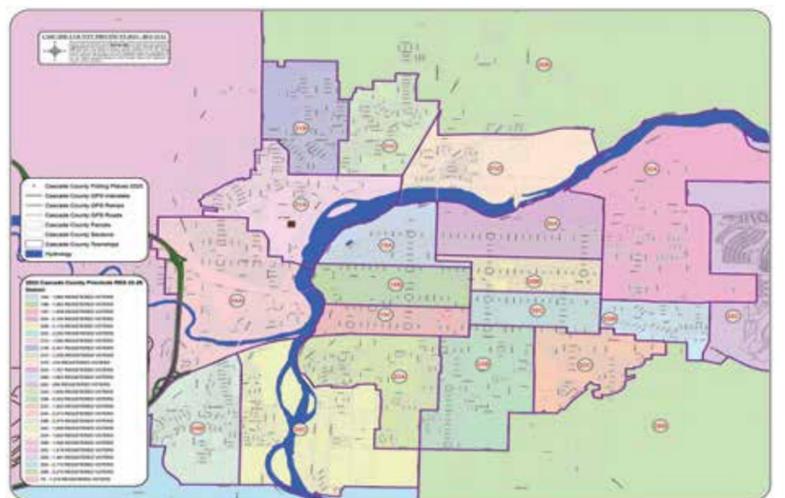
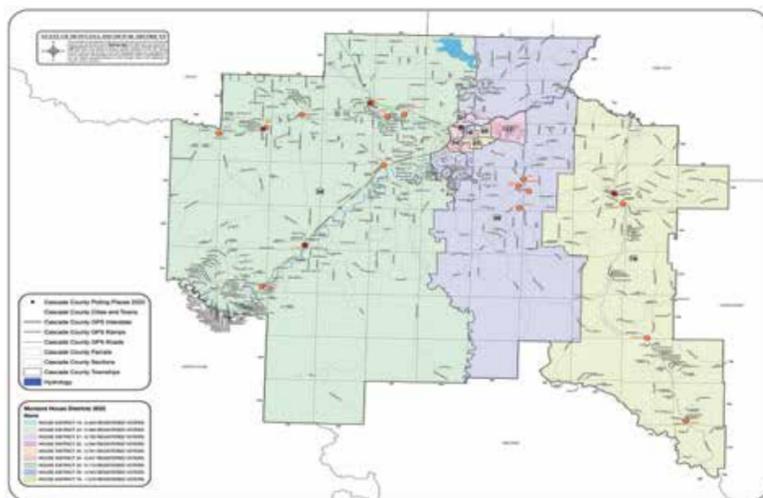
## KNOW YOUR CANDIDATES

	<b>Patrick O'Brien</b> <b>19A</b> Values: Courageous, Incorruptible <i>Running to replace member who never attended a committee meeting in 2024-26</i>		<b>Kirby Shepard</b> <b>22A</b> Values: Moral Sanity, Common Sense		<b>Dan Rockwell</b> <b>25A</b> Values: Lower Taxes, Less Government
	<b>Becky Anderson</b> <b>19A</b> Values: Community Focused, Preserving Freedoms		<b>Michaela Shepard</b> <b>22A</b> Values: Fiscal Responsibility, Traditional-Christian Family Values		<b>Garnett Rope</b> <b>25A</b> Values: Constitutional Conservative Christian, America First
	<b>Bob Brown</b> <b>19B</b> Values: Conservative Constitutionalist <i>Running to replace member who only attended 5 of 16 committee meetings in 2024-26</i>		<b>Jim Whitaker</b> <b>22B</b> Values: Community Involvement, Term Limits		<b>Blue Corneliusen</b> <b>25B</b> Values: Small and Local Government, Individual Responsibility
	<b>Cathy Brown</b> <b>19B</b> Values: Conservative Constitutionalist		<b>Sandy Whitaker</b> <b>22B</b> Values: Volunteerism, Family		<b>Lola Galloway</b> <b>25B</b> Values: Leave our Liberties Alone
	<b>Rudy Tankink</b> <b>20A</b> Values: Safe Communities, Promote Montana Values		<b>Bryan Blair</b> <b>23A</b> Values: Conservative Values Political Accountability		<b>Craig Madsen</b> <b>25C</b> Values: Authenticity, Integrity, Respect
	<b>Judy Tankink</b> <b>20A</b> Values: Fiscal Responsibility, Montana Quality of Life <i>Running to replace member who only attended 3 of 16 committee meetings in 2024-26</i>		<b>Brenda Blair</b> <b>23A</b> Values: Strengthening Families Preserving Freedom		<b>Linda Madsen</b> <b>25C</b> Values: Veteran, Honesty, Determination
	<b>Lorrin Darby</b> <b>20C</b> Values: Resolute, Steadfast		<b>Greg Bumgarner</b> <b>23C</b> Values: Common Sense, Fair Votes – Clear Results		<b>Brett Mills</b> <b>25D</b> Values: Integrity Duty to Country
	<b>Mike Scheer</b> <b>21A</b> Values: Honesty, Transparency		<b>Cindy Bedker-Bumgarner</b> <b>23C</b> Values: Truth and Transparency, Traditional Family Values <i>Running to replace member who only attended 1 of 16 committee meetings in 2024-26</i>		<b>Leslie Mills</b> <b>25D</b> Values: Limited Government, Fiscal Restraint <i>Running to replace member who only attended 3 of 16 committee meetings in 2024-26</i>
	<b>Cheryl Scheer</b> <b>21A</b> Values: Grounded in Faith, Integrity		<b>Rita Staley</b> <b>24A</b> Values: Involvement starts in our own backyard		<b>John Haines</b> <b>26A</b> Values: Integrity, Strengthen Small Business
	<b>Jim Thompson</b> <b>21B</b> Values: Limited Government, Financial Responsibility		<b>Patrick Coley</b> <b>24A</b> Values: Integrity, Accountability		<b>Ginny Rogliano</b> <b>26A</b> Values: Participation Based on Integrity, Accountability and Civility
	<b>Sharon Thompson</b> <b>21B</b> Values: Transparency, Godly Values		<b>LeRoy Meddock</b> <b>24B</b> Values: Integrity, Loyalty		<b>Ron Carpenter</b> <b>26B</b> Values: Local Leadership to Restore Local Control
	<b>Richard Czech</b> <b>21C</b> Values: Duty to Country, Limited Government		<b>Darlene Meddock</b> <b>24B</b> Values: Conservative, Honesty		<b>Rae Grulkowski</b> <b>26B</b> Values: Transparency, Private Property Rights, Civic Empowerment
	<b>Karen Czech</b> <b>21C</b> Values: Preserving Freedoms, Integrity		<b>Mike Cooper</b> <b>24C</b> Values: Honesty, Integrity		<b>Thad Stinson</b> <b>78</b> Values: Less Taxes, More Representation
	<b>Sally Tucker</b> <b>21D</b> Values: Your Voice, Montana First, Not Negotiable		<b>Katherine Mieyr</b> <b>24C</b> Values: Preservation and Restoration of Constitutional Rights <i>Running to replace member who only attended 8 of 16 committee meetings in 2024-26</i>		<b>Cindy Keaster</b> <b>78</b> Values: True Conservative With Integrity

These candidates actively support and promote the Republican Party Platform and paid for this ad

## Don't know what Precinct you live in?

Check your voter registration card or call the County Elections Office at 406-454-6803 and ask.





# Lies, Betrayal and Hidden Agenda-DeRoche's Underhanded Schemes Harm Voters

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Lynn DeRoche is a candidate for Cascade County Clerk and Recorder who has a proven track record on which to base her future performance. And fortunately, we have the benefit of a person who has investigated the performance of Lynn DeRoche. I introduce to you Steven T. Potts, attorney for the plaintiffs against Fort Shaw Irrigation District (FSID), the Cascade County Clerk and Recorder's office, and the Cascade County Commissioners.

Attorney Potts began a court brief in Cause N. ADV-23-255 in the Eighth District Court in Cascade County in this way:

"As former President Donald J. Trump recently said, "In some ways we're a third-world country... [W]e're a third-world country at our election." See The Independent, "Trump Claims US Elections Are 'Third World' Despite Sweeping Super Tuesday Primaries," 3/6/2024. The 2023 Fort Shaw Irrigation District (FSID) election conducted by Cascade County, including an election office administrator who did not know what she was doing and undermined by undependable and malevolent people, serves as a prime example. Together, they manipulated information about voting processes, deterred voters from casting ballots, and allowed others to cast ballots based on phony designation of agents."

Continuing, Attorney Potts writes, "Manipulation information about voting processes and deterring voters from accessing polling sites are two of the "many ways to prevent the casting of votes." National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Securing The Vote: Protecting American Democracy (2018) at 85-86. Here, with assistance from the Cascade County Election Office, the Fort Shaw Irrigation District provided incorrect information [to] electors that was based upon outdated statutes, laziness, and a lie..."

These are strong words and his words become stronger:

**"The bungling here was not one simple mistake by one person. It involved layers of bungling by all of the following bunglers, some of which was negligent and some of which was intentional."**

Below is part of the list of who Potts believes are responsible.

1. Lynn DeRoche, election office employee
2. A FSID clerk
3. FSID Board of Commissioners
4. All Cascade County Commissioners who voted to certify the election
5. Cascade County Attorney (Josh Racke's Office-advising the Cascade County Commission)

Potts' investigation reveals that "...Lynn DeRoche, an employee of the Cascade County election office, wrote to newly elected Clerk

and Recorder/Election Administrator, Sandra Merchant, advising her incorrectly by stating that "if there are joint property owners only one owner will get the vote. So, there must be a designated voting authority sent to all joint property owners."

This advice was incorrect and led to DeRoche having to continue to misadvise Clerk Merchant in order for DeRoche to cover-up her mistake, according to Potts' brief "... Election Office employee, Lynn DeRoche, engaged in nefarious conduct designed to bury designations already on file." DeRoche had worked in elections at Cascade County for many years. This wasn't her first rodeo, but she was loyal to the previous Democrat Clerk and Recorder, Rena Moore, and speculation is she intentionally sabotaged newly elected Clerk and Recorder Sandra Merchant. Voters have every right to question whether Lynn DeRoche is truly a Republican.

Potts then concluded that DeRoche decided to disregard the statute governing the election and "pull the wool" over the electors eyes.

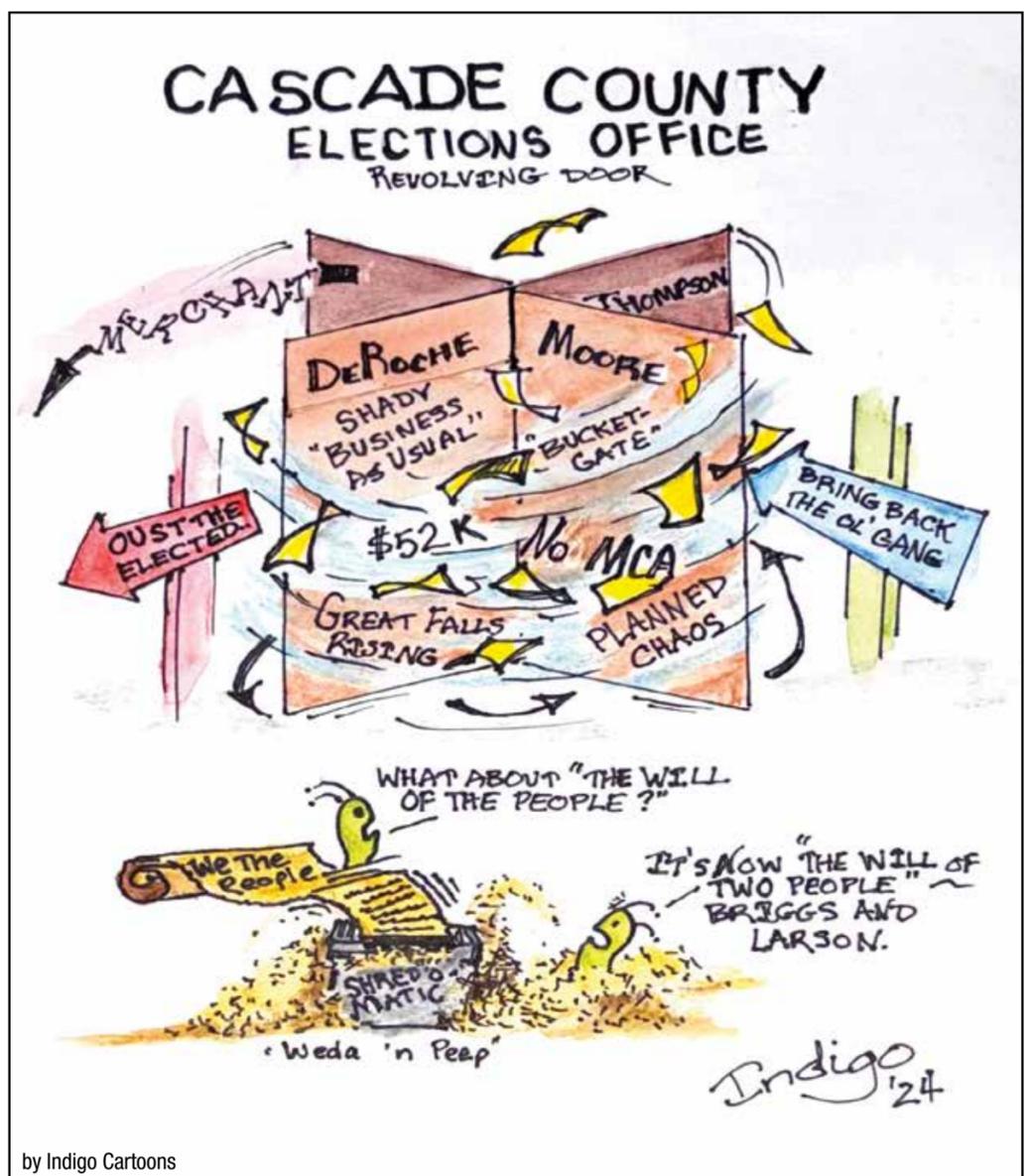
As a result, some landowners were denied their rightful shares of votes in the election. Some landowners, because of joint ownership, were denied any votes at all.

Attorney Potts' asserts that the Election Office disregarded the statute once the error was discovered and held the elections incorrectly anyway.

The story is troubling because it displays the hazards of not knowing the character and integrity of the people we elect to office. Mistakes are inevitable and forgivable. Even though the election was not conducted properly due to their own mistakes, they forged ahead and held it despite not being in compliance, in hopes that no one would discover the mistake. However, despite being discovered and a lawsuit occurring over it, where attorney Potts and the plaintiffs he represented won their case, the county was never held accountable for its mistake. The irony of the situation, is that DeRoche should have been fired, but instead they attacked newly elected Clerk and Recorder Sandra Merchant instead, and stripped the election responsibilities from her. Despite Lynn DeRoche being culpable and responsible for the irrigation ditch election debacle, she was never disciplined and she is hoping Cascade County voters continue to be ignorant over her culpability in the matter.

Cascade County's Voters only choice in the Primary election this June 2<sup>nd</sup> is Desarea Valentine.

Steve Vinnedge, Great Falls





# Desarea VALENTINE

## for Cascade County Clerk and Recorder

PAID FOR BY DESAREA VALENTINE CAMPAIGN  
1720 101h Ave 5 Ste 4 # 111 • Great Falls, MT 55405

Honesty. Integrity.  
Transparency.  
Trust your Clerk!





# The Liberty Bell

# VOTER GUIDE

## The Liberty Bell Editorial Board's

## Rationale for Endorsements

## June 2, 2026 Cascade County

## Primary Election

After weeks of reviewing candidate filings, voting histories, public records, campaign platforms, and direct interviews, the Editorial Board of The Liberty Bell has made its endorsements for the June 2, 2026 primary. Our guiding principles remain unchanged: we support candidates who have proven records of defending liberty, limited government, fiscal responsibility, Second Amendment rights, and Montana values — and who possess the personal integrity to serve without ethical cloud.

Although the majority of our endorsed candidates this cycle are Republicans, The

Liberty Bell evaluates every candidate — Republican, Democrat, Independent, or from any other party — and selects only those who best align with the convictions of the Editorial Board. We choose the best person for each office regardless of party label.

In several contested races, the Board was forced to withhold endorsement from otherwise qualified individuals after examining formally filed complaints and active lawsuits that raised serious questions about ethics, transparency, and fitness for office. Where such red flags existed, we disqualified those candidates from consideration, regardless of party or past rhetoric. The Liberty Bell will not risk endorsing anyone whose integrity could later embarrass our community or compromise public trust.

**Federal Endorsements** We proudly endorse the following candidates for federal office who have demonstrated unwavering commitment to constitutional principles, limited government,

and putting Montana first in Washington, D.C.:

- U.S. Senate – Charles Walking Child (R)
- Congressional District 1 – Dr. Al Olszewski (R)
- Congressional District 2 – Troy Downing (R)

**State Legislative Endorsements (House & Senate)** We proudly endorse the following Republicans who have earned our support through consistent prior votes for conservative priorities and demonstrated character.

Each of these candidates has a track record of voting against tax increases, for protecting private property rights, and for safeguarding Montana's agriculture and energy sectors from radical environmental overreach. They have shown integrity in office and a willingness to stand up to special interests.

## County Offices

**County Commissioner – Rick Wolke (R):** Proven fiscal conservative with a strong prior voting record on local budgets and infrastructure.

**County Sheriff/Coroner – Mindy Kahle (R):** Law-and-order leader with unquestioned integrity and law-enforcement experience.

**County Clerk & Recorder – Desarea Valentine (R):** Demonstrated competence and commitment to election integrity.

**County Treasurer – Diane Heikkila (R):** Solid record managing public funds responsibly.

**Public Administrator – Gerald Boland (D):** In a non-partisan role requiring absolute trustworthiness with estates and vulnerable citizens, Mr. Boland stands out for his integrity and decades of reliable service. We cross party lines when the candidate is clearly the best person for the job.

**Justice of the Peace – Dept. 1: Robert Polich – Dept. 2: Cayle Halberg** Both bring judicial temperament and a commitment to the rule of law.

## County Attorney – “No Confidence”

After exhaustive review of all candidates in this critical race, the Board could issue **no endorsement**. None demonstrated the

combination of prosecutorial toughness, ethical clarity, and conservative principles we demand for the county's top law-enforcement attorney.

## COUNTY RACES IN CASCADE COUNTY

Sheriff, County Attorney, Justice of the Peace, Public Administrator, Clerk & Recorder, Treasurer - 4 year terms  
County Commissioner – 6 year term

County Commissioner	• Rick Wolke (R)
County Attorney	• No Confidence
County Sheriff/ Coroner	• Mindy Kahle (R)
County Clerk & Recorder	• Desarea Valentine (R)
County Treasurer	• Diane Heikkila (R)
Public Administrator	• Gerald Boland (D)
Justice of the Peace	• Robert Polich – Dept. 1 • Cayle Halberg – Dept. 2

**Public Service Commission (PSC) Races** Both Jeff Pattison (District 1) and David Sanders (District 5) are strong conservatives whose values align with ours. However, the PSC is not a legislative body. It is a regulatory commission with direct oversight of energy policy, electric and gas utilities, railroads, pipelines, and telecommunications — highly technical areas that demand deep institutional knowledge.

After careful deliberation, we endorse **Jeff Pattison (R)** for PSC District 1 over challenger Jeremy Trebas. He possesses the most extensive experience and specialized knowledge in these complex regulatory matters. While we genuinely like Jeremy Trebas and would enthusiastically support him for a legislative or county-level seat, the PSC requires the candidate best equipped to protect Montana ratepayers and energy producers right now. Experience and expertise win this one.

**Final Note** These endorsements reflect a deliberate, evidence-based process. We chose candidates with clean records, proven conservative voting histories where applicable, and the personal integrity to serve Cascade County (and Montana) without distraction from complaints or lawsuits. The Liberty Bell exists to defend freedom and hold public officials accountable. On June 2, 2026, we urge every voter to do the same.

Vote like your liberty depends on it — because it does.

—The Liberty Bell Editorial Board Cascade County, Montana

## LEGISLATIVE RACES IN CASCADE COUNTY

Senate & Public Service Commission Term = 4 years  
House Term = 2 years

HD 19	• Hannah Trebas (R)
HD 20	• Tony Rosales (R)
HD 21	• Trevor Funseth (R)
HD 22	• Kevin Leatherbarrow (R)
HD 23	• Brett Mills (R)
HD 24	
HD 25	• Steve Gist (R)
HD 26	
HD 78 (Cascade County / Meagher)	• Randyn Gregg (R)
SD 10	• Jessica Dyrdaahl (R)
SD 11	• Steven Galloway (R)
SD 12	• Randy Pinocci (R)
Public Service Commission, District 1	• Jeff Pattison (R)
Public Service Commission, District 5	• David Sanders (R)



**ALL HAT NO CATTLE (from page 10A)**

school system—who was arrested for groping schoolgirls. In that case, the system shielded a predator rather than interposing for innocent children. When a magistrate like Kincaid ignores federal detainees for dangerous individuals, or when a leader like Slaughter shields internal misconduct, they are not protecting the Constitution; they are undermining the very safety that is the foundation of their office. It is a betrayal of the magistrate’s duty to stand as a bulwark against harm.

**The “Good Old Boy” Club vs. The Las Vegas Standard**

To understand the depth of this crisis, one must look at the contrast between the “Good Old Boy” system in Montana and the standards of accountability in more transparent jurisdictions like Las Vegas. In major hubs like Las Vegas, the Sheriff operates under a microscope of public and federal scrutiny. In those environments, a “Good Sheriff” understands that their primary duty is to the citizens, not a protected circle of officials.

In Cascade County, critics argue the system has been weaponized into “Lawfare,” where law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges shield one another. Internal records and employee reviews from platforms such as Indeed and Glassdoor describe the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office as operating under a “toxic and hostile” work environment, reflected in a dismal management rating of 2.7 out of 5 stars. Data from these employee-driven metrics suggest that this internal culture of turnover is a direct result of leadership that staff describes as “untruthful” and “corrupt.” When staff do not trust the administration to be honest, they leave — leaving the jail understaffed and more dangerous.

A stark contrast exists between Montana’s hiring practices and those of the rest of the nation. While federal law enforcement agencies—including the FBI, CIA, and Secret Service—mandate pre-employment polygraph examinations, Montana remains an outlier.

Nationally, over 62% of large law enforcement agencies utilize polygraph screening to verify the integrity of individuals who will eventually be called to testify at trials. In many states, this screening is a legal or procedural mandate. Montana, however, does not require such integrity testing for law enforcement or fire personnel. This lack of screening is particularly concerning in Cascade County, where the Sheriff has notably resisted independent polygraph scrutiny for himself despite using the tool on suspects. Experts like Dr. David Raskin note that properly administered exams exceed 90% accuracy and could clarify disputed statements especially regarding jail conditions and the Hanson shooting.

In June 2023, approximately 20 armed IRS and ATF agents raided Highwood Creek Outfitters and seized ATF Form 4473s—federal firearm transaction records containing the personal information of lawful purchasers, including

their names, addresses, and purchase details—despite the warrant limiting authorized seizure to financial documents. This raised concerns about the scope of the search and the implications to gun owners. Sheriff Slaughter was nowhere to be found as federal agents seized the personal records of Cascade County residents, including ATF Form 4473s. He did not demand notification, assert local authority, or publicly defend the rights of the citizens targeted — a failure to interpose that undercuts his claim of being a ‘constitutional sheriff.

This is the deeper scandal of our morally bankrupt judicial system. How have our judges become so corrupted in how they carry out their job? Many are the product of decades of progressive “criminal justice reform,” activist appointments, and a complete rejection of the biblical foundation of justice — the God-ordained duty of rulers to praise the good and bear the sword against evildoers (Romans 13:3-4). Why are so many judges letting violent offenders off the hook with low or no bail, electronic monitoring that criminals openly mock, and revolving-door releases? Because they have swapped God’s law for secular ideology: prioritizing “rehabilitation,” “equity,” and criminal “rights” over the protection of the innocent. They operate in a system shaped by weak theology, leftist pressure groups, and zero accountability — turning courtrooms into enablers of chaos instead of bulwarks of order.

The same broken system that under Sheriff Slaughter, in Cascade County, issued a deadly warrant over cat food purchases — resulting in the killing of Michael Hanson — is the very system that simultaneously turns violent predators loose on our streets. Both failures flow from the same root: judges who no longer answer to God’s higher law. One extreme kills the innocent through overreach — as seen when Sheriff Slaughter’s department aggressively enforced a questionable warrant, then covered the procedural violations by awarding the officer who fired first. The other extreme kills the innocent through reckless leniency. In Slaughter’s county, the overreach extreme is on full display: a sheriff who claims to be constitutional yet fails to interpose against his own department’s abuses, instead shielding them with honors and official rulings that ignore the audio evidence.

The consequences are deadly and repeat across the country. Consider these egregious examples: • In Charlotte, North Carolina, Magistrate Judge Teresa Stokes (Mecklenburg County) released career criminal Decarlos Brown Jr. — who had 14 prior arrests, including armed robbery — on nothing more than his “written promise” to appear in court for a pending misdemeanor. Months later, in August 2025, Brown stabbed and murdered Iryna Zarutska, a 23-year-old Ukrainian refugee, in a random attack on a light rail train. Brown now faces federal first-degree murder charges. In Houston, Texas, Judge Hilary Unger (Harris County) allowed Austin Collette — who had

already pleaded guilty to murder — to walk free on bond while awaiting sentencing. Collette then shot and killed his 21-year-old girlfriend in a murder-suicide just months later in April 2025.

These are not isolated tragedies. They are the predictable fruit of a judiciary that has forgotten its duty before God and the people.

For years, conservatives have watched federal and state overreach erode parental rights, religious liberty, and public safety. The solution the Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates has always pointed to is local action. Sheriffs are not mere bureaucrats; they are constitutional officers with the authority — and the duty — to interpose when higher powers endanger the people.

Sheriff McMahill and the men and women of Metro are showing the way. They are refusing to rubber-stamp a decision that would put a known threat back on the streets. They are defending the community they swore to protect. **Sheriff Bianco is showing the same resolve in the realm of election integrity.**

This is the blueprint conservatives must follow. Educate your local officials. Vet and elect faithful leaders who understand both the Constitution and the higher law. Support sheriffs who will not bow to unjust orders. Attend public meetings. Pray for revival — and when courageous magistrates arise, stand with them.

The future of our families and communities does not depend on Washington or state capitals. It depends on lesser magistrates remembering their duty before God. Sheriff McMahill just reminded the entire nation what that looks like. **So too has Sheriff Bianco.**

Cascade County is clearly headed in the wrong direction, led by its law enforcement leader Sheriff Jesse Slaughter. Many of us want to “back the blue” — until it happens to you or your family. But there isn’t much to celebrate with how destructive Slaughter’s leadership has been to the community, to his own staff, and to public trust.

Cascade County deserves a sheriff who actively interposes as a lesser magistrate when needed—upholding the Constitution without exception, demanding transparency, and prioritizing lives over politics. It’s time for independent review and real accountability—not just words. It is time for real change. Voters have the opportunity to elect a constitutional sheriff who will actually interpose for the people: support Mindy Kahle June 2nd in her race against Slaughter.

The lesser magistrates are no longer waiting to be called. One just answered. It is time for the rest of us to answer with them and remember to vote June 2nd-this primary is where the decision is made to support courageous candidates that support the people, rather than establishment business as usual that protects big government at the expense of the people. 🇺🇸

**Commissioners Shield Sheriff Slaughter’s Office by Stalling Cascade Policing Mediation Until After Primary**

**By Staff Writer**

The Town of Cascade’s effort to resolve a deepening law enforcement crisis has hit a political wall after Cascade County Commissioners abruptly postponed a critical mediation session regarding the Sheriff’s Office contract. Originally scheduled for **April 1, 2026**, the meeting was intended to address a dispute that has left the town’s budget and local safety in a state of uncertainty. By pushing the negotiations into the summer months, officials have effectively shielded Sheriff Jesse Slaughter’s office from public scrutiny and potential embarrassment during the heat of his primary campaign.

The conflict began in April 2025, when the town received a proposed contract from the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office demanding a **29% increase** in the cost of law enforcement services. Compounding the fiscal strain, the Sheriff’s proposal included a clause explicitly stating that deputies would no longer enforce local town ordinances. This move would leave Cascade residents paying significantly more for a reduced level of service, stripped of enforcement for local rules regarding traffic, noise, animal control, and parking.

Following a series of failed negotiations and a public Town Hall in May 2025, local leaders sought relief through the legal system. The Town of Cascade officially invoked **House Bill 333**, a 2025 law specifically designed to create a formal mediation process when municipalities

and county law enforcement cannot reach an agreement. The law mandates that both sides negotiate in good faith to protect both the public budget and the integrity of local law enforcement.

However, the good-faith requirement of the law appears to have been sidelined by the Cascade County Commissioners. By delaying the April 1 session, the commission has ensured that the uncomfortable details of the Sheriff’s 29% hike and the refusal to enforce town ordinances will remain behind closed doors until well after the primary election is decided. This delay mirrors the classic “good old boy club” tactics long associated with institutional shielding in Montana politics, prioritizing political survival over the immediate needs of Cascade’s taxpayers.

“The town has made it clear it wants a contract that protects both the budget and the ability to enforce its own rules.”

Until the mediation is rescheduled for the summer, the residents of Cascade are left without a firm contract or a clear answer on who will handle local code violations. While both sides are legally required to eventually negotiate, the postponement ensures that Sheriff Slaughter avoids a public accounting of his leadership and the CCSO’s measurable institutional failures until the ballot boxes are closed. For now, the Town of Cascade remains in a holding pattern, waiting for a seat at the table that was promised by law but delayed by politics. 🇺🇸

**PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

There will be a mediation conference between the Town of Cascade and the Cascade County Commissioners on behalf of the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office’s proposed contract.

In April 2025, the Town of Cascade received a proposed contract with the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office. The Town of Cascade held a Town Hall meeting on May 23, 2025, to understand what our community wants and needs are for law enforcement in the upcoming year. On June 23, 2025, the town met with the Cascade County Sheriff’s Office to discuss the proposed contract. An agreement could not be reached.

The proposed contract requests a 29% cost increase and no enforcement of local ordinances.

The proposed contract has not been agreed upon; therefore, the Town of Cascade requested that the issue go to mediation under House Bill 333.

This non-quorum **public meeting** will be held on April 1, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. It will be held at Wedsworth Hall, 13 Front St. in Cascade.

The public is encouraged to attend and observe the meditation.





# A Pattern of Deception by Cascade County Sheriff Jesse Slaughter

## The Erosion of Justice in Cascade County

Op-Ed By Jesse Wagner

The thin veneer of “constitutional” leadership in Cascade County is peeling away to reveal a record defined by sworn falsehoods, staggering taxpayer-funded settlements, and a systemic failure to uphold the rule of law. While Sheriff Jesse Slaughter publicly champions himself as a “constitutional sheriff,” the official record suggests a pattern of behavior that directly undermines the U.S. and Montana Constitutions.

The clearest evidence of this disconnect emerged during a June 2024 coroner’s inquest into the death of Michael Hansen. Under oath, Sheriff Slaughter testified there was “absolutely no unlawful activity” by his office, yet Montana statute tells a different story. Montana Code Annotated § 46-5-227 explicitly requires officers to exhibit an original search warrant to occupants upon request. During the encounter, Detective Jacob Try—who later received a national award based on a nomination filled with inaccuracies—refused Hansen’s repeated demands to see a warrant, ordered him off his own property, and jumped the fence without presenting any paperwork. While the investigation was reportedly centered on



Jesse Slaughter

the purchase of cat food for another individual, it escalated to a fatal shooting where independent audio analysis indicates Detective Try fired first and then again before the victim got off a single shot. Furthermore, a 9mm casing was later discovered at the scene despite official claims that all evidence had been collected.

These local failures are underscored by a grim statewide record of excessive force and a lack of oversight. From 2013 to 2023, Montana law enforcement recorded 72 killings, a deadly-force rate higher than 86% of all other states, or 2.1 killings per 10,000 arrests. Alarming, 39% of those killed statewide did not have a gun. Montana’s accountability score remains among the lowest in the nation; only about 14% of civil complaints against officers are ruled in favor of civilians. Cascade County operates squarely within this environment of “lawfare,” where overly cozy relationships between law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges often protect the system instead of the people, contributing to Montana ranking near the top nationally for wrongful convictions per capita.

Nowhere is the cost of this unaccountable leadership more visible than inside the Cascade County Detention Center, the facility Slaughter

directly oversees. It has become a focal point for preventable tragedy, resulting in \$750,000 in taxpayer-funded wrongful-death settlements alone. This includes a \$550,000 settlement for the 2021 suicide of Michael Lee Alexander, Jr., and a \$200,000 settlement for the 2022 suicide of Aleesha Mae Kempa. The crisis has only accelerated, with three inmates dying within a single two-week period in the summer of 2024—two by suicide and one by overdose. Meanwhile, the department’s internal culture has faced its own scrutiny, with multiple detention officers arrested in 2025 on felony assault, domestic violence, and DUI charges.

True constitutional leadership requires transparency and the willingness to submit to the same scrutiny applied to the public. Most states require polygraph screening for law enforcement precisely because courts rely so heavily on officer testimony. While Slaughter’s department uses polygraphs on suspects when convenient, he has refused the same standard for himself. An independent polygraph examination by a neutral expert could clarify disputed statements regarding jail conditions, the Hansen incident, and the Sheriff’s own sworn testimony. As advocates appeal for a citizens’ grand jury through the federal courts, the demand for genuine reform grows louder. Cascade County deserves leadership that upholds civil rights and due process rather than undermining them through falsehoods and systemic failures. 🇺🇸

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- ✓ I am committed to bringing your voice to the State and Federal authorities in protecting our Constitutional rights.
- ✓ I look forward to working with local authorities in addressing the drug problems in Cascade County.
- ✓ Truth, Honesty, Accountability: these traits are essential in law enforcement, and as Sheriff, I will hold myself accountable to the citizens of Cascade County.
- ✓ My staff and I shall be accessible to all the communities that make up Cascade County.
- ✓ Up-to-date training is critical for all law enforcement, as it reduces liabilities and increases professionalism.

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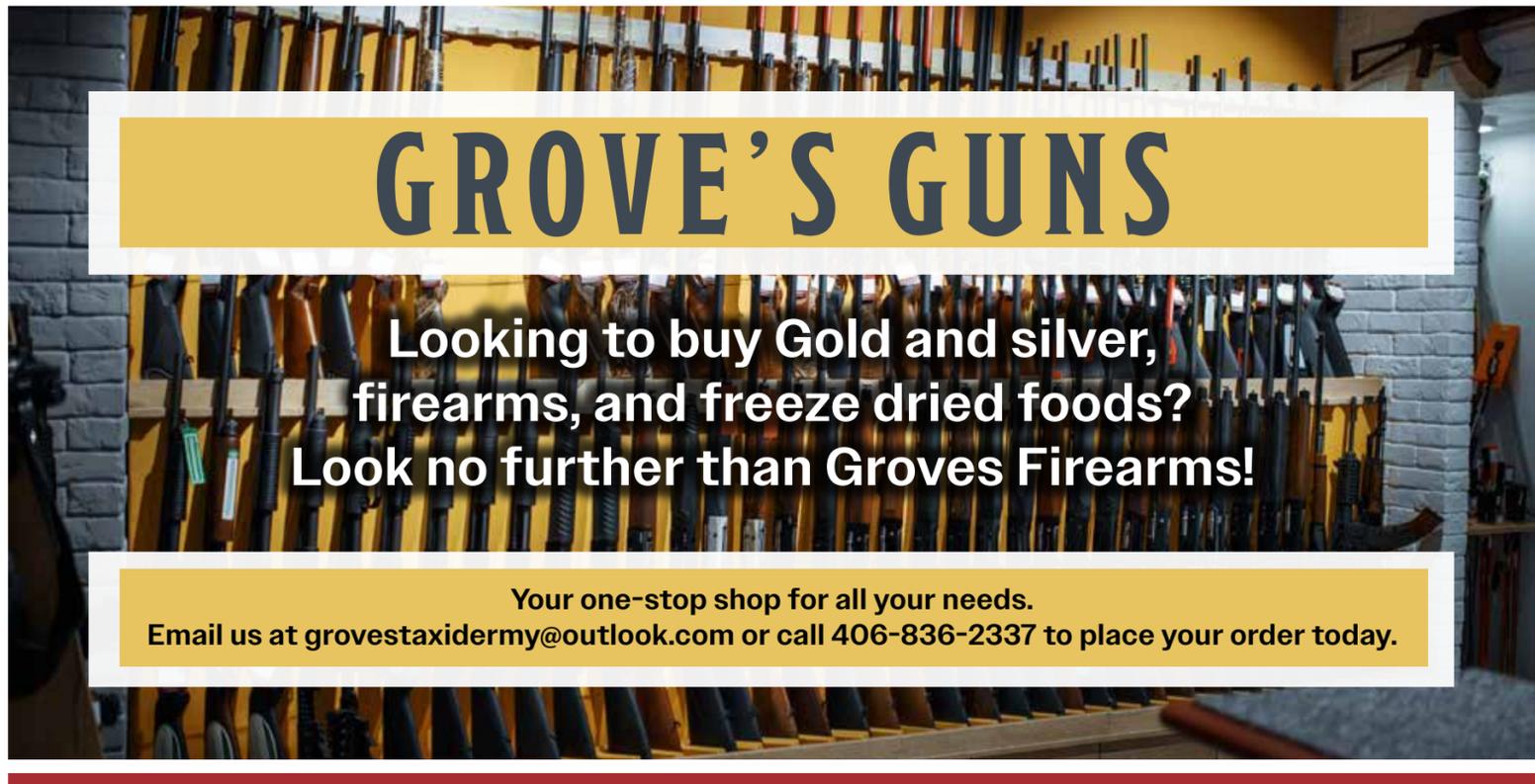


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# MONTANA'S DATA CENTER BOOM

## Promise or Peril for Power, Water, and Communities?

By Renee Pirtz

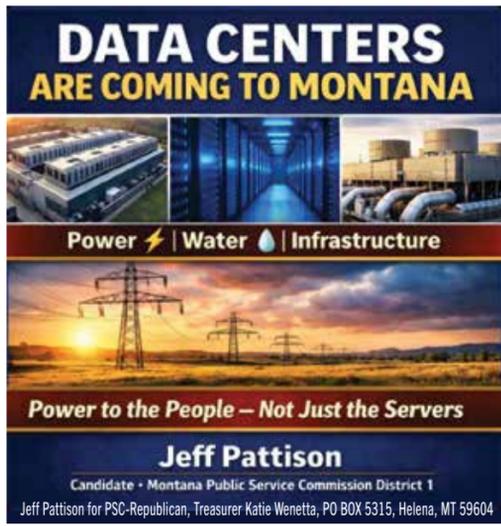
As artificial intelligence, cloud computing, and global tech demand surge, Montana has unexpectedly become a hotspot for hyperscale data centers. Vast open land, naturally cool nights, and access to long-haul fiber optics have drawn major developers scouting the Mountain West. But with proposals accelerating—NorthWestern Energy in talks with at least 11 entities, including signed letters of intent or agreements with companies like Quantica Infrastructure (planning up to 1,000 MW south of Broadview), Sabey Data Centers (250 MW west of Butte), and Atlas Power Group (150 MW expansion in Butte)—Montanans are asking hard questions: Who really benefits, and at what cost to our grid, water, and way of life?

One of the most consequential proposals now driving public concern is the massive **5,000-acre data center planned south of Broadview in Yellowstone County**, led by Quantica Infrastructure through its Big Sky Digital Infrastructure platform. According to reporting from the *Billings Gazette*, NorthWestern Energy has issued a **non-binding letter of intent to supply up to 1,000 MW of electricity** to the project—an extraordinary amount equal to roughly two-thirds of the power NorthWestern currently owns.

At a recent public forum in Billings, hydrologists, environmental experts, and local residents raised concerns about the project's potential water use, noting that a facility of this scale could require **millions of gallons of water per day for cooling. A data center of this scale would use between 1–5 million gallons of water per day — the equivalent of a city of 10,000 to 40,000 people. That's more water than many rural communities, including Broadview, use in total.** Others questioned the strain such a load would place on Montana's already-constrained grid, and whether ratepayers could ultimately be saddled with the cost of transmission upgrades needed to serve a single industrial customer.

**The Montana Environmental Information Center notes that the Broadview project would be the largest proposed data center in the state, with power demand rivaling that of a major metropolitan area. The organization warns that such a facility could reshape regional energy planning for decades.**

Data centers are power hogs. A single hyperscale campus can demand as much electricity as a small city, and Montana's grid—already stretched—isn't fully equipped. Transmission lines near capacity, new load



requests outstripping supply, and upgrades potentially costing hundreds of millions raise a core issue: Who foots the bill? In many states, these infrastructure costs get passed to everyday ratepayers, not the tech giants driving the demand.

Jeff Pattison, a third-generation farmer and rancher from Glasgow running for Montana Public Service Commission District 1, sees the stakes clearly. The PSC regulates utilities like NorthWestern Energy and has authority over large-load approvals, ensuring new industrial users don't harm existing customers.

“Are data centers going to power Montana or consume our power. The real question is: will they power Montana's future... or consume the power and water our communities depend on?” Pattison said. “Data centers bring investment and innovation, but they also bring massive demand for electricity and water. As a third-generation farmer and rancher, I know these resources aren't abstract policy ideas—they're the backbone of our farms, ranches, and communities.”

One promising solution Pattison proposes to ease grid strain without massive new construction is reconductoring existing transmission lines with advanced conductors, such as Aluminum Conductor Composite Core (ACCC) conductors. These use a lightweight carbon-fiber composite core instead of traditional steel, allowing far less thermal expansion (and thus minimal sag) when lines heat up under heavy loads. This enables roughly double the current-carrying capacity (ampacity) compared to equivalent-diameter steel-core conductors like ACSR, while reducing line losses by up to 25% or more through greater aluminum content and efficiency. For Montana's constrained grid, ACCC could unlock significant hidden capacity on existing rights-of-way—helping accommodate data center loads or other growth without building entirely new lines, towers, or corridors. It also cuts energy waste, lowers long-term costs through reduced losses, and improves resilience against high-demand scenarios.

Despite these advantages, utilities have often been reluctant to adopt ACCC and similar advanced conductors widely. Reasons include higher upfront costs (typically 1.5–3 times more than traditional options), concerns over installation complexity and potential damage to the composite core if mishandled (though Pattison shares that newer designs like InfoCore help verify integrity), limited long-term field data in diverse conditions, and a conservative industry preference for proven technologies with decades of track record.

In the Northwest, adoption remains limited—not because the technology lacks benefits, but because many utilities are still unfamiliar with modern composite-core conductors and how they change project economics. When utilities evaluate only the per-foot conductor price, they often overlook the immediate infrastructure savings that ACCC and similar composite-core systems create through reduced sag, lighter weight, and lower structural loading. These engineering advantages can reduce tower height, shrink foundation size, and cut steel requirements, making advanced conductors competitive or even more affordable on a total-project basis.

Water adds another layer of worry in drought-prone Montana. Most large facilities rely on evaporative cooling, guzzling millions of gallons daily—competing with agriculture, municipalities, and slow-recharging aquifers. Hydrologists warn that industrial-scale use could push regions toward long-term scarcity, especially as drought cycles intensify.

The jobs pitch often falls flat too. Developers tout economic growth, but a typical hyperscale site creates only 20–50 permanent positions—mostly specialized roles like network engineers or high-voltage technicians, rarely filled locally. Construction brings temporary workers from out-of-state, leaving minimal lasting impact compared to the public resources required.

Then there are the everyday nuisances: Backup diesel generators (dozens per site) produce noise, exhaust, and vibrations during tests or outages. Cooling towers and chillers hum constantly, while 24/7 security lighting creates light pollution—disruptions that hit hard in quiet rural communities.

Gov. Greg Gianforte has actively promoted Montana as a data center destination, highlighting our advantages in land, climate, and fiber to attract high-tech investment and diversify the economy. Supporters see tax revenue and prestige. Critics, however, point to generous incentives wiping out much of that revenue, public burdens for power and water, minimal jobs, and lasting environmental strain.

Pattison emphasized protection for Montanans first: “If elected to the Montana Public Service Commission, my priority will remain simple: Power to the People. That means making sure Montana families and businesses are protected first—and that large industrial users pay their fair share for the infrastructure they require. I'm not a career politician. I'm a citizen advocate and statesman who believes the people paying the bills deserve a voice. And when it comes to Montana's power and resources... The people come first.”

Recent developments underscore the urgency. NorthWestern has preliminary deals for up to 1,400 MW combined by 2030—enough to power hundreds of thousands of homes—while groups like environmental coalitions petition the PSC for safeguards, including separate rate classes for large loads to prevent cost-shifting to households. Some proposals have stalled (e.g., a Great Falls campus), but others advance amid calls for transparency on water use, emissions, and ratepayer impacts.

Montana faces no easy path forward. Balancing economic diversification with reliable, affordable power and water for residents, farmers, and small businesses will define the debate. As more proposals emerge, communities demand answers: How much power and water? Who pays? What protections exist?

The answers will shape whether data centers become a boon—or a burden—for the Treasure State. 🗳️

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