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The Liberty Bell

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WALL STREET MEETS BIG ENERGY

The Looming Corporate Power Grab Threatening Montana's Grid

By Lisa Bennett

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Across the Western United States, a massive consolidated monopoly is taking shape behind closed doors—and Montana ratepayers are positioned to bear the burden.

The proposed merger between NorthWestern Energy and Black Hills Corporation aims to forge a regional energy giant serving 2.2 million customers across eight contiguous states. Corporate executives pitch the deal under glowing promises of "enhanced scale" and multi-billion-dollar infrastructure investments. Yet, a closer look at institutional stock holdings, past rate-payer history, and the state's regulatory climate reveals a stark reality: Montana faces an unprecedented concentration of power that threatens local economic sovereignty and utility affordability.

Who Owns Black Hills? Wall Street's Heavyweights

While utility companies market themselves as local community servants, their underlying ownership paints a distinctly financialized picture. Institutional mega-investors dominate the capital structure of Black Hills Corporation.

Leading the pack of institutional owners are institutional investment titans:

- **BlackRock Institutional Trust Company, N.A.** holds approximately 13.97% to 14.6% of Black Hills stock.
- **Vanguard Portfolio Management, LLC** and **Vanguard Capital Management, LLC** collectively hold over 11% of total shares.
- **State Street Investment Management** controls nearly 5%.

Together, Wall Street asset management firms and hedge funds

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Bridging the Gap

How Grid United Can Align With America's Industrial Renaissance

By Lisa Bennett

As the push to bring manufacturing back to American soil accelerates under the current administration, energy demand is skyrocketing. National leaders are aggressively courting multi-trillion-dollar investments to rehome industrial plants, tech hubs, and energy-intensive data centers across the American West, including Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Northern California.

For projects like Grid United's 420-mile North Plains Connector, aligning with this economic renaissance offers a tremendous opportunity to set a new gold standard for American energy resilience. As our nation celebrates its 250th anniversary, corporations that build our critical infrastructure have a unique patriotic calling: to look past a century-old dependency on heavy steel-core technology and invest in the next 250 years of American prosperity. Montana Public Service Commission (PSC) Commissioner Randy Pinocci has highlighted the immense stakes involved in building a grid capable of supporting this growth, emphasizing the vital role of modern technology:

"I have a responsibility to point out these common-sense benefits of carbon core transmission lines."

(continued on page 2A)

Families Who Lost Loved Ones Under Rigid COVID Hospital Protocols Take Their Fight to Capitol Hill

Widows and relatives who lost loved ones under rigid pandemic rules hope the September 28 gathering will open the door to formal hearings on hospital accountability

By Liberty Bell Staff

WASHINGTON — For years, grieving families have carried the same unanswered questions: Why were they locked out of hospital rooms while their spouses and parents deteriorated? Why did requests for alternative treatments or simple discharge meet a brick wall? Why did standard protocols appear to override family wishes, informed consent, and even the desperate hope of a dying patient?

Sen Ron Johnson

On September 28, some of those families will finally place their stories before a United States senator in a Capitol Hill roundtable convened by Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin. The event is not a formal congressional hearing. Organizers and participants, however, see it as a critical first step toward the deeper investigation they have long demanded; one that examines the role hospitals and their protocols played in the deaths of thousands of Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"These are serious questions," the families insist. "Isolation, denied treatments, forced ventilation, and a system that seemed to value federal reimbursements more than patient outcomes deserve real scrutiny."

The roundtable will focus on the experiences of relatives who say their loved ones were subjected to stringent hospital protocols that left little room for individual judgment, family advocacy, or alternatives. Participants plan to describe a recurring pattern: patients isolated from advocates, requests for early or non-protocol therapies refused, discharge and transfer attempts blocked, and rapid escalation to mechanical ventilation after heavy sedation. Many believe these practices were reinforced by financial incentives that rewarded aggressive COVID coding and intubation far more than recovery-oriented care.

Fighting Hospitals in Court — and Losing

The anguish did not stop at the

(continued on page 5A)

BRIDGING THE GAP (from page 1A)

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Meeting the Capacity Demands of Industrial Reshoring

With trillions of dollars in investments flowing into data centers and domestic manufacturing under President Trump's industrial agenda, power demands are soaring across Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Northern California. Commissioner Pinocci notes that capturing this economic momentum requires looking ahead:

"Not only is the 525kv capacity not sufficient for the trillions of dollars in investments into data centers, data centers alone can use that much power, but it doesn't take into account the rebuilding of America's industrial manufacturing that President Trump has achieved. The western United States will not be competitive for those manufacturing facilities if we don't have the power they need."

"I believe with the demands for power from the western United States, 525KV isn't going to be sufficient, but if that's something Grid United cannot change, then at the very least they should focus on the safest, most reliable and affordable carbon core transmission lines to run that DC power."

Enhancing Safety, Efficiency, and Ratepayer Value

Embracing advanced materials offers a powerful way to safeguard communities while lowering long-term costs. Relying on traditional steel-core lines—a technology over a century old—introduces heavy thermal sag, which remains a leading cause of line outages and catastrophic fire risks. In contrast, advanced carbon-core conductors provide unprecedented safety and operational intelligence:

"Steel core is the heaviest line and causes line sag which is the number one cause of line outages and fires. If we stop one fire because we move to carbon core instead of steel transmission lines, how much is saved? What price do you put on saving lives? Steel lines

(continued on page 3A)

Montana's Luz's Mexican Food

Luz Paul's delicious Authentic Montana Mexican Food has been around since Luz opened her restaurant, Luz's Mexican Restaurant, in 1978 on Fox Farm Road in Great Falls Montana. Luz's Mexican Food has been enjoyed ever since.

Now Luz's Dream for many years to Wholesale her Sauces and Foods has become a reality. Luz's Hot Sauce, Salsa, Chili Verde, Enchilada Sauce, Chips, Sausage Breakfast Wraps, Bacon Breakfast Wraps, and Beef, Chicken and Cheese Enchiladas. More of Luz's Mexican Food are all part of the Wholesale Dream. Buy a couple or a few for your freezer.

Luz's products are available locally at the following locations:

Simms C-Store, Simms
Big Sky Deli in Vaughn
Gas and Shop, Great Falls
Gas and Shop, Vaughn, Sun Prairie
2Js Fresh Market, Great Falls
Bootlegger Espresso, Great Falls
Great Falls College MSU, Great Falls
Kemaghan's, Great Falls

Everyday IGA, Great Falls
Big Sky Grocery, Great Falls
Super1 in Great Falls & Helena
Town & Country, Helena
Heritage Food Store, East Helena
Cory's Valley Market, Seeley Lake
D&D's Food Town, Lincoln
Stokes, Conrad

Java Hut, Conrad
Rex's Market, Choteau
Bear Paw Meats, Havre
CHS Min West, Missoula
Glacier Family Foods, Browning
Fresh Start Grocery, Geraldine

Please Contact Marci Marceau if you would like to add Luz's Mexican Food Products to your Retail Store, Coffee Shop or Restaurant at 406.590.0406 or email her at luzsmexfood@yahoo.com.

WALL STREET BIG ENERGY (from page 1A)

control over 80% of Black Hills Corporation. When decisions are made at the executive level, the primary imperative is driving quarterly shareholder earnings and target returns for multinational financial institutions—not lowering monthly electric bills for working families in Billings or Great Falls.

The Acquisition Track Record: Rate Increases and Infrastructure Debt

History offers a clear guide to what happens when Black Hills expands its footprint. Across previous acquisitions and regional utility operations in Wyoming, Colorado, and South Dakota, the company has repeatedly filed for rate adjustments to recover infrastructure costs and capital expenditures.

In Colorado and Wyoming, base electric rate reviews and rider adjustments have consistently pushed residential electric costs higher. Ratepayers in acquired territories have seen regular hikes driven by capital recovery mechanisms, demand charges, and transmission line rebuilds. When private entities absorb local systems, guaranteed returns on capital investments ensure that corporate expansion is subsidized directly by residential and small commercial customers.

Public Accountability Dodged: CEO Refuses to Testify

In proceedings before the Montana Public Service Commission (PSC), critical questions regarding corporate accountability have been met with silence from top executives.

Public Service Commissioner Brad Molnar, who was recently striped of his duties by a vote from three of his fellow commissioners on the MT PSC (Jennifer Fielder, Jeff Wellborn and Annie Buchacek, highlighted this glaring lack of transparency during recent evidentiary hearings. While NorthWestern Energy CEO Brian Bird and CFO Dale Lail appeared to offer testimony, the Chief Executive Officer of Black Hills Corporation, the very entity slated to hold majority control, refused to show up and testify under oath.

"Where is the CEO of Black Hills? He's going to be the majority holder. Where's his CFO?"* Commissioner Brad Molnar noted. *"The people they sent up were people that would be on the board if a new entity emerged... They will fabricate a story. Why would the PSC go through with the merger?"

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Molnar criticized the regulatory environment, pointing out that top leadership dodged entering formal testimony into the official record to avoid direct cross-examination regarding executive compensation packages, corporate debt transfers, and actual operational strategies.

Grid Interconnects, Data Centers, and the Risk of Western Oligopoly

The true strategic value of the merger lies in controlling critical regional transmission interconnects. By merging NorthWestern and Black Hills, the combined entity—proposed under the banner of Bright Horizon Energy Corporation—would control a massive transmission web spanning from the Pacific Northwest down through the Rocky Mountain region.

This consolidated control creates a virtual regional oligopoly over high-voltage power routing. At the center of this power push is the massive demand from commercial data centers.

Key dangers facing Montana ratepayers include:

- **Shifting Data Center Costs onto Residents:** While industrial data centers receive preferential tax treatment—such as reduced property tax rates—the heavy grid backup commitments required to serve them (often requiring double the megawatt capacity for redundancy) threaten to strain grid capacity.
- **Billion-Dollar Transmission Liabilities:** Despite initial claims that no major buildouts would be needed, regulatory disclosures reveal potential billion-dollar transmission expansions. If commercial tech tenants abandon facilities, local ratepayers remain on the hook for stranding transmission line costs.
- **Erosion of Local Ratepayer Representation: By spanning eight state jurisdictions, no single state commission will oversee more than 33% of the company's combined business. This diluted oversight makes it far easier for corporate executives to bypass local public utility commissions and push through systemic rate hikes.**

If left unchecked by regulatory interveners and public oversight, Montana risks surrendering its energy grid to out-of-state monopolies, where decisions serving Wall Street index funds will dictate the cost of heating local homes and the MT PSC will have little say in the power that powers Montana or the rates charged.

BRIDGING THE GAP (from page 2A)

cannot be monitored both for failure points and sensitivity such as drones flying nearby. Carbon core is embedded with the technology to pinpoint a problem to within 1 inch."

Furthermore, the economic advantages flow directly back to consumers. Beyond eliminating line sag and reducing multi-million dollar wildfire risks, carbon core technology can save millions of dollars per transmission tower because the lines do not require as much steel and do not need to be built as tall. According to manufacturers like Epsilon, carbon-core solutions can match traditional steel costs while delivering substantial operational savings:

"Epsilon, a manufacturer of carbon core transmission lines says it can match the cost of steel conductors," states Pinocci. He adds, "Carbon Core companies say that between N. Dakota and Colstrip in MT, using carbon core transmission lines will save $1 million dollars a year on line loss. That is money that goes directly into the pockets of ratepayers because every bill has a calculation for line loss added that ratepayers pay for."

A Pivotal Moment for American Infrastructure

Grid United stands as a pivotal corporation working on the newest additions to our aging national grid. Having already secured vital, long-lead converter station agreements with Hitachi Energy, they have demonstrated strong project leadership. Because physical conductors and poles remain under design, leadership has a natural window to make a bold, forward-thinking choice.

By stepping up during this historic 250th anniversary year to deploy cutting-edge carbon-core technology instead of outdated steel, Grid United can showcase true corporate patriotism. Embracing this smart evolution ensures mutual success for the corporation, protects everyday ratepayers, and locks in the high-performance energy backbone required to power America for generations to come.

The Liberty Bell

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SCAN TO DONATE:

Top 27 Revelations in the Fauci Diaries

By Jeffrey A. Tucker
Special to The Liberty Bell / The Epoch Times

The combined files necessary to unravel the COVID era—the actors, the motivations, the many moving parts—run into the hundreds of thousands of pages. Confusing and convoluted does not quite describe them. One way to conceptualize the fullness of the issue is to focus on the most remarkable document yet, the daily logs of Anthony Fauci, now called the diaries.

They were kept on government computers. Their preparation was assisted by government employees. By law, the results belong to the public. And yet it is obvious that these notes were a first draft of what he hoped would be his autobiography. These were left behind when he retired from public service in December 2022.

My own analysis confirms my big picture framing of his motivations throughout. Fearing a disclosure that Fauci himself funded the research that created the virus, his actions that followed were an attempt to convert villainy to valor, while his cultivated fame was structured to avoid shame.

1. The clue comes very early in the diary when COVID was barely hitting the news. He was ginning up frenzy over a probable flu pandemic that he hoped would serve as a cover story.

Jan. 3, 2020:

> Also **44 unusual cases of pneumonia in Wuhan, China** opver the past couple of days. Etiology still unknown. Said to be a "viral pneumonia' of unknown etiology. Flu ruled out. Cases linked to a seafood market. No human-to-human transmission documented at this time.

A week later:

> **Jan. 10, 2020 (Friday)**– Infleunza is hot and heavy. Vaccine match is OK for H1N1, but not so good for B and H3N2. Did **WUSA local TV on flu** as well as **interview with Elizabeth Cohen of CNN** that went on her blog with multiple references to our conversation.

The CDC was confused and displeased by Fauci's push to warn of a bad flu year because it was nowhere justified in the data.

Then-NIAID director Anthony Fauci talks to members of the press prior to an event at the State Dining Room of the White House in Washington on Jan. 21, 2021. *Alex Wong/Getty Images*

From Jan. 14, 2020:

> Apparently, **CDC is upset** because I am saying that this is on a course to be as bad a year as 2017-2018 and 2014-2015. In fact, the flu infection "numbers" are exactly on tract with those years. However, there are less total deaths and hospitalizations. This is due to the fact that Influenza B has predominated early that this hits kids more severely. Since the elderly account for most of the deaths and hospitalizations, the total of these are down; however for this time compared to other years, the number of pediatric deaths is way up. And so it depends what you mean by a 'bad' season. I say it is a bad season and CDC says no. There was a discussion between Azar and Nancy Messonnier of CDC about this and about my statements, but no one thought of getting me on the conference call. Not good. Typical CDC!

2. The work on the vaccine started already on Jan. 14, earlier than we thought. Moderna, named from mRNA technology, was already the chosen company. Dr. Barney Graham was tagged to work on it. He owned a patent on methods of manipulating the spike protein of coronaviruses.

> **Jan. 14, 2020 – Barney Graham's team starts work on GMP vaccine in collaboration with Moderna**

(continued on page 6A)

Nearly 1 in 7 Christian Colleges Maintain Abortion Industry Ties, Studies Show

Support for Planned Parenthood and abortion vendors has risen on faith-based campuses since Roe's reversal, according to multi-year research

By Lisa Bennett

A series of investigations by Students for Life of America's Demetree Institute for Pro-Life Advancement has found that a significant and growing number of U.S. colleges and universities affiliated with Christian denominations maintain relationships with Planned Parenthood or other abortion-related organizations—despite their institutions' claimed Christian foundations.

The 2023 Christian Schools Project examined 767 colleges and universities affiliated with Christian churches. Researchers identified 76 schools—approximately one in ten—with some form of connection to Planned Parenthood or the abortion industry. That figure represented a roughly 10 percent increase from the 69 schools flagged in a similar 2021 review. Infractions commonly included listing Planned Parenthood as a student "health resource," offering internship or volunteer opportunities with the organization, hosting related events, or making public statements supportive of abortion. Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Lutheran institutions accounted for large shares of the documented cases.

Researchers noted that the rise occurred in the period following the Supreme Court's 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*. "At this critical time in history, when women and children need life-affirming pregnancy and parenting help, an alarming number of Christian schools have abandoned the Biblical value of the sanctity of life in favor of propping up the abortion industry," the 2023 report stated.

The most recent installment, the 2025 Christian Schools Project, surveyed 725 institutions described as affiliated with Christ-centered denominations that publicly claim a historical Christian foundation. (Denominations that openly affirm abortion, such as the Disciples of Christ, United Church of Christ, Quakers, and Moravians, were excluded.) The investigation found that 114 schools—more than one in seven—maintained some relationship with the abortion industry or Planned Parenthood specifically. Researchers initially identified 118 schools with 533 total infractions before outreach prompted a handful of institutions to remove some or all connections, leaving 114.

According to the 2025 findings, support for Planned Parenthood and abortion-related activity at these Christian schools has increased by nearly 20 percent since the 2022 *Dobbs* decision and by more than 38 percent since the prior year's report. The most frequent

(continued on page 5A)

COVID ROUNDTABLE (from page 1A)

hospital door. Across the country, families turned to the courts in last-ditch efforts to force hospitals to administer treatments they believed might save their loved ones, or to stop protocols they feared were hastening death. In nearly every case that reached higher courts, the hospitals prevailed.

In Ohio, Julie Smith sued West Chester Hospital in August 2021 to compel staff to give ivermectin to her husband, Jeffrey Smith, who lay in a medically induced coma on a ventilator. A judge initially granted an emergency order requiring the hospital to administer the drug for 13 days. A subsequent ruling overturned that order, holding that a court cannot force a hospital to provide care that falls outside established medical standards or lacks broad scientific consensus.

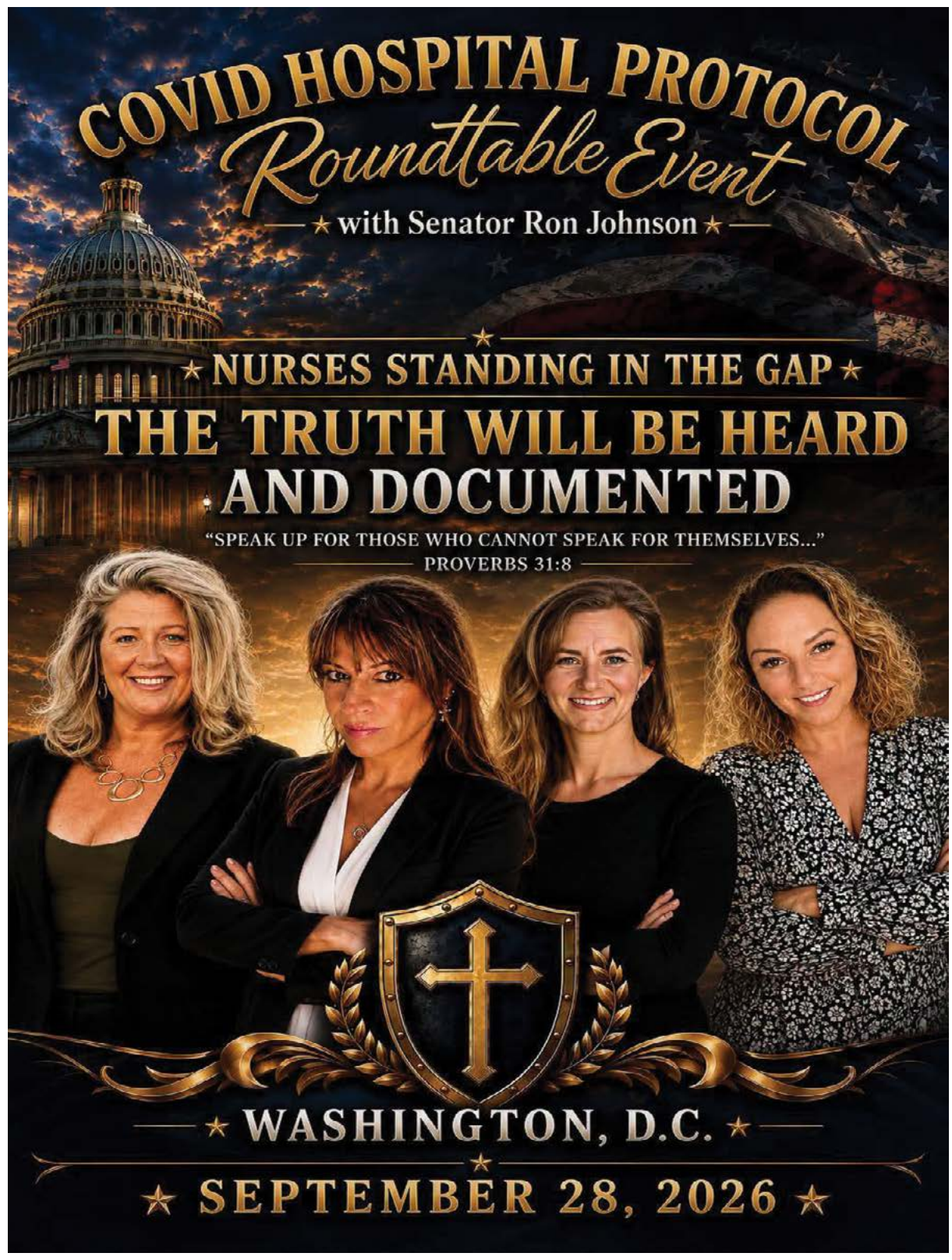
In Kentucky, registered nurse Angela Underwood sued Norton Brownsboro Hospital in Louisville, demanding the right to administer ivermectin to her husband, Lonnie Underwood, herself if hospital staff refused. A circuit court judge denied the request, ruling that courts cannot legally require a hospital to take orders from outside individuals or mandate an unproven off-label therapy.

In Wisconsin, Allen Gahl sued Aurora Health Care to force the administration of ivermectin to his uncle, John J. Zingsheim. The case climbed to the Wisconsin Supreme Court, which ruled in 2023 that patients and their families do not have a legal right to compel a private hospital or physician to administer a specific treatment against the providers' medical judgment.

Other families focused their legal fire on the drugs hospitals insisted on giving. In late 2022, two California widows, including Evangeline Ortega, filed a fraud lawsuit against Kaiser Permanente and Redlands Community Hospital. They alleged their husbands received the antiviral remdesivir without informed consent or knowledge, that the drug contributed to organ failure, and that hospitals had financial incentives to use it. Activist networks such as Medical Justice Minnesota formed around similar collective actions, accusing local hospitals of isolating patients, confiscating personal vitamins, and forcing standard medications against families' explicit wishes.

Lower courts sometimes issued temporary emergency injunctions when families were desperate and patients were dying. Higher courts consistently reversed those orders. The prevailing legal consensus, echoed by major medical and bar associations, held that there is no constitutional right to demand a specific treatment, and that judges must defer to the medical standard of care and the clinical judgment of hospitals rather than family preferences or emerging alternative approaches.

To the families, those rulings felt like a second betrayal. While they fought in courtrooms, their loved ones remained behind closed doors, subject to the very protocols the lawsuits sought to interrupt. Many never got the chance to say goodbye in person.



A Pattern of Isolation and Control

The legal battles grew out of experiences that families describe as dehumanizing. Visitation bans left spouses, children, and adult children unable to advocate, interpret wishes, or simply hold a hand. Requests for discharge or transfer to facilities willing to try different approaches were frequently denied. Hospitals cited protocols, liability concerns, and the prevailing standard of care. Families experienced those decisions as a form of medical captivity: once admitted, patients and their advocates lost the practical ability to exit the system or alter its course.

Senator Johnson has previously used hearings, investigations, and roundtables to probe aspects of the government's COVID-19 response and has called for greater transparency. The September 28 gathering is designed to put the hospital-protocol experiences themselves on the record — medical documentation, timelines, photographs, text messages, and firsthand testimony from relatives and from healthcare workers who questioned the rigid rules.

Organizers emphasize that the roundtable is not a trial and does not establish legal findings against any particular hospital or clinician.

It is an opportunity for the people who lived through the isolation, the refused alternatives, and the final days on ventilators to be heard at the national level. From there, participants hope the discussion will build momentum for formal hearings that examine how hospital policies, financial incentives, and institutional deference combined to shape patient outcomes.

"We are not asking anyone to accept every claim without evidence," one family representative said. "We are asking that the medical records be examined, that the questions about consent and isolation be taken seriously, and that the people who watched their loved ones die under these protocols finally have a seat at the table."

For the widows and relatives who have spent years gathering documents, filing lawsuits that ultimately failed, and searching for accountability, September 28 is not an endpoint. It is a beginning, a chance to turn private grief into public scrutiny of the hospitals that, they believe, put protocols and profits ahead of the patients they were entrusted to heal.

The search for answers, transparency, and accountability continues.

CHRISTIAN COLLEGES (from page 4A)

category of infractions involved listing abortion

© Ken Wolter | Dreamstime.com

providers as health or pregnancy resources (about 26 percent). Other common issues included classroom materials, internship pipelines for academic credit, promotion of events or speakers, and positive highlighting of alumni working in the abortion field. Methodist-affiliated schools accounted for the largest share of infractions (nearly 37 percent in one summary of the data), followed by Catholic institutions (under 25 percent).

Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, has repeatedly criticized the trend. "Especially at Christmas time, it's disappointing to see so many faith-affiliated institutions fail to teach the students about the irreplaceable value of every life, born and preborn," she said in connection with the 2023 findings. In later comments tied to the ongoing project, she emphasized that cultural change must begin with the church and institutions dedicated to enduring values.

Not every development has been negative. Across the years of the project, dozens of schools have severed documented ties after contact from researchers or public awareness efforts—eight in the 2023 cycle alone in one accounting, and 50 connections removed between 2024 and 2025 according to the latest report. The number of schools earning top "A+" grades for having no abortion-industry connections *and* actively supporting local pregnancy help centers has also grown. The vast majority of the surveyed institutions continue to receive clean or high marks for the absence of such ties.

The Demetree Institute grades schools on a scale from A+ (no infractions plus promotion of life-affirming pregnancy centers) to F (four or more infractions). In the 2025 data, 47 schools received failing grades. American University in Washington, D.C., recorded the highest number of infractions in that cycle.

The reports argue that parents, alumni, donors, and church constituents reasonably expect institutions bearing the "Christian" name to uphold core biblical teachings on the sanctity of life. Researchers say the findings reveal a gap between those expectations and certain institutional practices visible on public websites, student health materials, career resources, and academic programming.

Full white papers and lists of infractions from the Christian Schools Project are available through the Demetree Institute for Pro-Life Advancement and Students for Life of America. The Liberty Bell Newspaper will continue to monitor responses from the institutions named in the studies.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12-13

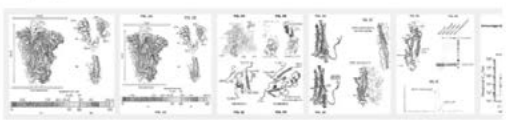
FAUCI (from page 4A)

Prefusion coronavirus spike proteins and their use

Abstract

Coronavirus S ectodomain trimers stabilized in a prefusion conformation, nucleic acid molecules and vectors encoding these proteins, and methods of their use and production are disclosed. In several embodiments, the coronavirus S ectodomain trimers and/or nucleic acid molecules can be used to generate an immune response to coronavirus in a subject. In additional embodiments, the therapeutically effective amount of the coronavirus S ectodomain trimers and/or nucleic acid molecules can be administered to a subject in a method of treating or preventing coronavirus infection.

Images (24)



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Current Assignee : Dartmouth College , Scripps Research Institute , US Department of Health and Human Services

Worldwide applications

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Application US16/344,774 events

3. The same week, Jan. 26, 2020, Fauci is in contact with Nancy Messonnier of the CDC—the sister of Rod Rosenstein of the DOJ whom Trump forced to fire James Comey—and the first person to brief NYT, WaPo, and the WSJ of likely lockdowns on Feb. 25. The NYT pushed lockdowns Feb. 27 with a podcast and then two op-eds the next day. Messonier never consulted the White House.

Here is Jan. 26 when it all began. Here is where Fauci works with Messonier to "coordinate our responses." This same day, Fauci says that "Bob and I feel … that we should be allowed to send our CDC epidemiologists to China" to "see the data first hand" since the United States will "base important response activities" on what they see.

> **Jan. 26, 2020** – GAME ON!!! Things are changing rapidly. Dr. Ma Xiaowei, the Chinese Minister of Health gave a press statement saying that the incubationperiod of nCoV is 1 to 14 days and that the virus is being transmitted when people are asymptomatic! This has enormous implications for how we handle people from Wuhan (like our diplomats who are now on the way back from WUHAN, having been ordered to evaculate). Should we quarantine them. I am very skeptical about the Chinese interprepation of their data. I spoke with Mike Ryan (WHO) from Geneva and he and Tedros are going to Wuhan soon. Mike is very skeptical that aymptomatic spread is present or at worst is a major driver of spread. Mike Osterholm also feels this way.
> I spoke with Nancy Messonnier and Bob Redfield this AM to coordinate our responses. Bob and I feel (and I told Elizabeth Cohen this) that we should be allowed to send our CDC epidemiologists to China to work with them so that we see the data first hand since we will base important response activities and strategies based on whether this is true. It would require our quarantining for a period of time even asymptomatic people who arrive from Wuhan.

4. We can reasonably presume that Fauci knew of the lab leak many months before. He likely hoped that SARS-CoV-2 would vanish into the firmament of a bad flu season but China made that impossible. He also likely knew that it would not hold up to blame wet markets.

From Jan. 26, 2020, the same day as he was planning to send emissaries to China, he was already scripting a narrative.

> It now appears using epi data and genomic data that the first infection was in early December and was not connected to the market. The infections spread among people weeks before the Chinese reported that they were dealing with a new infection and that gave the virus time to establish itself in multigenerational (sustained) spread. Remember, early on the Chinese were saying that there is no human to human transmission and all the original 27 cases were from the market. Now we know the market was not the source, it was the amplifier. Having said that, somewhere the virus jumped from animals to humans.

5. From early 2020 through 2021, it was a common claim by Fauci and others that the incubation period of COVID was up to two weeks. This matters because it would suggest an unusual silent spread that would justify extreme actions. In reality, he already knew on Jan. 30, 2020, that the latency period was 2–5 days, same as the common cold.

> **Jan. 30, 2020** – Another amazing and difficult day. Briefed the House Energy and Commerce Committee members in Rayburn 2123. All my friends kept saying I was a national hero and they "….felt safe in my arms (Eschoo)". Testifying with me were Bob redfield, Bob Kadlec and denise Hinton (FDA).
>
> The chaos: We had 2 PCCS led by Ruggiero and one Deputies lead by Mick Mulvaney with the usal cast of characters. Case in point. Mart Cetron who was listening in on the WHO call said that the epidemic was accelerating that this is was clear that the incubation period was shorter (2-5 days than was previously felt and that asymptomatic transmission was occurring. Thus, it was agreed to present to the POTUS a revised plan for containment: The 200 people at March Base would be quarantines for 15 days.

6. On Jan. 31, 2020, we find Fauci's first mention of his key worry, namely that the virus would be traced to his research. He says this is a conspiracy theory and crazy but he also had a problem. Many scientists were saying that the virus looked manufactured. He has assembled a team to prove otherwise, with the result of the famous "Proximal Origin" paper published weeks later.

> When I got back to my office, got call from Jeremy Farrar who sounded very concerned and conferenced me in with Kristian Anderson, an evolutionary biologist from Scripps. They had also been talking with Eddie Holmes, another evolutionary biologistfrom Sidney Australia. There have been conspiracy theories that the virus was given GOF by inserted mutations and deliberately or accidentally released in Wuhan. One theory was written by Indian investigators that HIV sequences were inserted by a Chinese person in Canada and released in Wuhan. Everyone thinks that is crazy, but the Farrar phone call was different. The people on the phone felt that the mutations around the furine

7. Fauci's first meeting with Trump in the Oval Office was Feb. 6. Fauci used the occasion to urge him to ask Xi Jinping for an invitation to tour Wuhan, a junket arranged by the World Health Organization. This trip, attended by Fauci aide Clifford Lane, returned a glowing report of how China handled the virus. Fauci reports on this in the entry of Feb. 6, 2020.

> Briefed the Asia/East Asia Ambassadors on nCoV in Room EEOB-350. Then had long meeting of Coronavirus Task Force is Sit Room of WH chaired by Mick Mulvany at 4:00- 4:45PM when the core group of Task Force were called to Oval Office to brief POTUS. When we walked in the POTUS was not yet in the room. When he walked in with Melania, the first thing he did was say""Anthony, come here and say hello to Melania". Then, to my embarrassment in front of everyone (Kellyanne, Mick, Bob O'Brien and many in Cabinet) he told Melania that I was the smartest person in the world. We then sat down and briefed him and Melania. He asked what he could do and we said that since he would be calling Chinese President Xi Jinping late this evening, he could ask him to approve the WHO delegation of scientists that include CDC and NIH people. He did what he did last time and directed most of the questions to me, again ending with asking me if I thought that we were on the right track.

8. Meanwhile, on Feb. 8, 2020, Fauci got word that the case fatality rate was not 2–3 percent but 0.2 percent, in line with a bad flu and hardly justifying a CCP-like response. Fauci later exaggerated the "mortality rate" as ten times the annual flu.

> Tom Frieden called me this AM and we discussed various aspects of the outbreak. He and I are on the same page in thinking tht this is acting like a bad influenza in its transmissibility and that the denominator is much greater than 34,867 (above) making the case fatality rate (CFR) more like 0.2-0.3 % rather than 2.0%.

9. The head of NIH went to the Cayman Islands as the crisis was breaking, really at the most critical point. Vacation in a tax haven and major hub for private banking? Maybe. Entry from Feb. 23, 2020.

> The suggestion is to ship them to the NIH Safra Lodge so that they have access to NIH SCSU. This would be disruptive to NIH, but there does not seem to be many alternatives. Had discussions with Francis (boarding a plane to Grand Cayman) and Larry while on my C & O canal walk with Chris about how to address this difficult and frustrating issue. Francis on way to Grand Cayman for vacation. This leave it to Larry and I to "fix".

10. For most Americans, the day March 16, 2020, was the start of the great reset when the federal government issued guidelines to close all places where people gather and otherwise stand six feet apart. For Fauci, who had worked on this plan for weeks or much longer, this was just another day.

> **Mar. 16, 2020** – Came out with the guidelines that reflected my pushing for a more aggressive mitigation 15 day strategy → If you are elderly, self-isolate; do not congregate in groups >10 people; stay away from bars, restaurants, theaters, sporting events; if a community has community spread CLOSE the bars, restaurants and places of congregation; close schools where there is community spread; no visitors to nursing homes; if family member is sick, others in family should take extra percautions; only necessary travel, telework as much as possible.
>
> Press conference after was highly attended. Stock market dropped byu 3000 points, the biggest percentage drop in history.

11. It was Fauci who takes credit for stopping Easter celebrations in 2020. Entry from April 4, 2020:

> POTUS continues to ramble at presser. Prior to the presser, POTUS invited me and Deb into his inner office at the OVAL and started telling me that as a Catholic how much of a shame it would be if we did not do a classical Easter and Good Friday and Palm Sunday. He wanted to figure out how to do a version of it like outdoor mass or stay in car and do drive in theater-like mass. Hope Hicks and I convinced him to essentially put Easter on hold for this year. Then he went on and on (almost pleading) with Me (mostly) and Deb saying that he cannot keep the country closed beyond the 30-day extension. He rambled on and on that we are destroying this great country and started rattling off the names of various sports commissioners (NBA, MLB, NHL, etc.) who said that their sports would be destroyed if we did not open up. Also, he said industry (all the industrial giants) would be forever destroyed. He said that he understood where Deb and I were coming from, but he could not let the country die and so one way or another, he is opening up in 30 days. He went on and emphasized this over and over at the press conference, which immediately followed his conversation with me and Deb.

12. The April 23, 2020, entry is very important. Trump fully realized that he had been hornswoggled. This is the moment of the great turning. Also this is a completely new revelation. Trump flipped from tolerating the lockdowns for fear of the political implications of downplaying the virus toward wanting to end them.

> After the presser (about 1 hour) Deb Birx texted and then called me saying it was good that I was not there since after the presser, the POTUS called her into the Oval and started yelling at her saying "You and Fauci have destroyed the country and the economy. I should never have listened to you. You have completely destroyed us." He kept saying this over and over again and was yelling at her. I encouraged her that we are OK and at the end of the day she and I will be loved by the people we care about. She was relieved and after wrote me a text sincerely thanking me.

13. On June 15, 2020, Fauci urges that Trump should not hold campaign rallies.

> **June 15, 2020** – Global – 7,700,000/428,000 USA – 2,100,000/116,000;
>
> Governor's call today at WH and I was not invited.
>
> BARDA requesting FDA to pull back the EUA for Hydroxychloroquine and Chloroquine, I was always against the EUA for HC and Ch since I did not believe that it fulfilled the criteria (some indication of efficacy) for an EUA: see link below. Also, this is the issue that Rick Bright has blown the whistle on, i.e. saying that he was pressured into recommending to FDA (when he was head of BARDA) to issue the EUA.
>
> Got call from Michael Caputo today asking if I thought that the POTUIS should cancel his campaign rally. I told him definitely yes.

14. Fauci had doubts about Moderna but the company was already tagged from mid-January to manufacture the inoculation…

> **June 17, 2020** – Global USA
>
> **Serius problem emerging with Moderna** who are insisting (see discussions above) on implementing the protocol for mRNA in a way that both Larry Corey and John Mascola feel strongly is contrary to the safe followup of people who get infected and also contrary to good science in being able to get good end point data. We have tried, but theyhave a CMO who is incompetent (Tal). Their CEO Stephane Bancel has a company that has never made a product or done a trial despite the fact that by somewhat questionable PR have built up a cash ase of billions of dollars. We may have to threaten them with the withholding of BARDA. This will be a sticky issue and likely very time consuming. I will have to work through Francis, Azar, Marc Short, Mark Meadows, POTUS. Yikes!

15. Once the summer of protest fun was over, Fauci was back in business, calling California governor Newsom's health adviser to urge longer lockdowns. Notice how it is always the religious and patriotic holidays that are cancelled.

> **July 1, 2020** – Global – 10,200,000/504,000; USA – 2,620,000/128,000. Most involved states now pulling back on opening and closing bars and cancelling events for the upcoming 4th July. Spoke yesterday with Marc Khaly from California (see above). He is going to cancel all crowding activities over the weekend. He calls me regularly for advice.

(continued on page 7A)

FAUCI (from page 6A)

16. On Oct. 2, 2020, Donald Trump was hospitalized for COVID. Fauci says Trump took Remdesivir. Fauci had earlier warned against this drug for COVID on grounds that it has no benefit in previous uses and could be toxic.

> POTUS admitted to Walter Reed with increasing sxs. Received Regeneron monoclonal antibody. I had called Sean Conley and told him that this is what I would do. He agreed. Later in day received Remdesivir. I reached out again to Sean Conley to help again. No response. WH really shutting down comms with outside world.

17. Fauci calls the signers of the Great Barrington Declaration the "3 stooges."

> **October 7, 2020** – Global USA
>
> Alex Azar met yesterday with Atlas and his 3 stooges – Jay Bhattacharya (Stanford), Sunetra Gupta (Oxford) and Martin Kulldorff's (Harvard). Seems that he is buying into Atlas

18. In case anyone had any doubt, Fauci thinks that anyone who voted for Trump in 2020 was crazy. Just consider this. He served in the Trump administration and played a huge role in getting Trump to greenlight and then extend the lockdowns.

> **November 16, 2020** – Global – 54,300,000/1,300,000; USA – 11,000,000/246,000
>
> Continual surge: 138,000 new infections yesterday. POTUS has no interest at all in the Pandemic. He is focusing on blocking Biden from being POTUS. He is embarrassing the USA. However, 72,000,000 voted for him. Difficult to understand. Craziness has overtaken part of our country (1/2).
>
> Jared Kushner did call me up right before the press briefing related to the Moderna vaccine announcement (see below)

19. Already by Jan. 9, 2021, before mass distribution of the shots, Fauci knew that the mutations were outrunning the formula. Again, nothing surprising here and entirely predictable. This was a turning point for Fauci because his plan to be valorized for releasing the cure was failing.

> **David Ho** is doing tests on convalescent sera and sera of people who were vaccinated and is finding disturbing data in both the UK and worse in the RSA mutants. **It looks like the vaccine might be compromised.** We need to prepare to modify the vaccine if this observation holds up.

20. Jan. 12, 2021, a plan falls into place: mRNA to outrun mutations.

> **Had regular every 2 weeks call with Bill Gates** – Bill and Trevor Mundel know about the issue with the mutations that David Ho is working on. We discussed working together to track them as well as using Gates money to jump-start the development of mRNA vaccines to match the mutations (B.1.1.7 variant) with the N501Y mutation. We need to be ready to respond

21. It was Jan. 14, 2021, when Fauci received a message from one of the world's most respected virologists, David Ho, that the Delta variant could render the vaccines "useless."

> vaccines. Importantly, the strategy that the UK is now contemplating (giving one dose and delaying the second dose) is quite dangerous in that one or two additional critical mutations on top of either strain (under suboptimal antibody concentrations induced by one shot without a booster) could render current monoclonal antibodies and vaccines useless. Our data are germane to that debate. Our data are more or less complete, except for live virus neutralization results. We are still waiting for the UK and SA to be distributed by the US government to our lab. We expect to have the

22. The news got worse two months later with evidence that there is fetal exposure to mRNA injections. Fauci is mainly upset about the implications for public relations.

> **March 15, 2021** – Global – 119,600,000/2,600,000; USA -29,300,000/532,400
>
> Got call tonight from Larry Horowitz saying that **Drew Weissman and his collaborator are planning to hold a press conference to discuss their studies in mice** showing that an intramuscular injection of the mRNA vaccine leads to an immune response in the amniotic fluid of the pups in a pregnancy model. The FDA has already received the DART (Development and Reproductive Toxicology) studies from Moderna and Pfizer. According to Emily these studies were clean. The FDA has heard about the Weissman studies and feels that they are invalid. The two companies also feel that the studies are invalid. However, we cannot blow them off for obvious reasons. Even if the Weissman studies prove to be invalid, the fact that they are holding a press conference is going to create a huge mess. Hopefully, we can get this sorted out and have a repeat of studies to counter this finding. More later.

23. Fauci had a pulmonary embolism June 19, 2021, most certainly a vaccine injury.

> **June 19, 2021** - Global USA
>
> **Horrible roller coaster day – Due to some acute transient right posterior chest pain 2 days ago, Ted Li order a CT scan.** - I got a call from the radiologist at Sibley hospital where I had gotten a chest CT in the morning telling me that I had a lesion in my right lower lobe that he felt was a cancer (non-small cell carcinoma). I felt like I got hit like by a Mack truck. Doctor Li quickly followed up on this and show the film to Andrew Lerner at Sibley who is a pulmonologist specializing in pulmonary nodules. Doctor Lerner felt that it was more likely an inflammatory lesion and there were multiple other lesions that were very small throughout the right lower lobe. In addition, I had a pulmonary infarct in the right lowest segment that was definite. Again, Dr. Li called David Hellmann Who was with his son who is an oncologist who looked at it and said that it looks more benign then neoplastic and felt that it did not look like a non-small cell carcinoma. Finally, they showed the films via computer to Dr. Elliot Fishman who is the top radiologist at
>
> **Released by Chairman Rand Paul**
>
> Hopkins. He agreed that it was more likely inflammatory and that the only definite thing on the film was the pulmonary infarct. He recommended a follow-up CT in three months and **begin anticoagulation immediately with Eliquis.**

24. Here is the moment when Fauci realized (or was willing to admit) that the shot was not even plausibly effective.

> **August 17, 2021**
>
> **There is a lot going on and a lot of moving parts.** We have been working very hard on trying to get a plan and a program out to deliver third boost shots to people who have received the original two dose vaccine regimen for M RNA. This is a complicated issue because it appears that the vaccines in the United states as well as globally particularly in places like Israel and England among others are still holding strong and preventing hospitalization and deaths but there is a dramatic diminution with the delta variant in protection against infection and symptomatic disease. There is an inkling that we are starting to see increase in hospitalizations particularly in Israel in vaccinated people. Jeff together with the White House team has been working on a plan to be implemented starting September the 20th to get a third shot to everyone in a cadence beginning with those who originally had received the vaccine first. These people are fundamentally health care workers, the elderly, and people in long term care facilities and nursing homes. The problem is the data that definitively show that we are seeing an increase in

25. There is a group of 50 doctors called the "TV Doctors" who meet to get instructions. Can't make this stuff up. Not a conspiracy at all.

> **Sept. 28, 2021**
>
> **Yesterday was an important day during one of the zoom calls with the "TV doctors ", i.e. people who are practicing physicians and public health people who regularly appear on TV shows.** I made it very clear that I was very much in favor of providing booster shots for virtually everyone who is eligible for a vaccination. I said to the group of perhaps 50 people , mostly doctors, that the idea that only thing that you have to worry about with vaccines is keeping people out of the hospital is a false narrative since there are many people who do not require hospitalization who suffer greatly from getting infected with the virus. I know that this is contrary to the current recommendations of the CDC and the current authorization by the FDA . However, I believe that the judgment of who should get it was overly determined by an understandable consideration of the lack of doses for people in the developing world. In addition, there is a concern about safety regarding myocarditis for younger people, mostly men; however, once this is taken care of in my mind there is no reason not to vaccinate essentially everyone. This becomes even more important since there is great confusion right now with the so called gradation and prioritization of who should get vaccinated regarding when and how. We are getting a lot of blowback about this confusion which I totally predicted when I said we should make things very simple. Anyway, I made my thoughts very clear to the group on this call.

26. Incredibly, Fauci got mixed up in the FTX scam. This is from July 17, 2022, leading to the midterms of which SBF was a major funder.

> **I had a very good talk today with Sam Bankman-Fried and his brother Gabriel Bankman who runs a foundation called "Guarding Against Pandemics". Also on the call were their associates Jacob Swett and Annabel Snidow.** (see above) . We spoke about how Sam with his billions of dollars could partner with the NIH and pushing the scientific agenda for the **prototype pathogen approach of pandemic preparedness**. Sam is a good friend of senator Joe Manchin and Joe is the one who originally pointed Sam in my direction to see if somehow we can all work together to having some sort of a partnership where the Congress puts in a certain amount for pandemic preparedness using the prototype pathogen model and Sam puts in an equal amount to support the effort through NI AID. We left it that they put together a proposal and that I serve as the scientific advisor for the amount of money that Sam wants to put into this even though I must be careful and will be careful about not getting involved in writing any legislation since Manchin has been talking about writing this into a reconciliation bill.

27. For his part, Fauci just wanted to sell a product, even if it was useless at best and probably dangerous. Plus, the news would undermine the mandates.

> **August 6, 2022**
>
> **Continued drama now involving Larry Horowitz calling me up talking about how angry Ron Klain is at Rochelle for wanting to come out with a statement that the vaccines do not protect against infection at all. I have to look at the data but I think that although protection against true infection is low to modest at best, it is not zero and so I cannot figure out, and I am sure that this is what is bugging Ron, why the CDC needs to put that statement out now exactly at the time when we are pushing people to get the new BA.5 variant in early to mid-September.**

> **August 13, 2022**
>
> **More drama with regard to the CDC and Rochelle Walenski.** After much going back and forth between the CDC and the other docs including me, Vivek, Steve Cha, and to some extent David Kessler, we thought we had gotten them pulled back from making the statement that the vaccines were not effective at all in preventing infection and transmission. The reason this is an issue is that if they came out with that statement, which in fact is not entirely true since there is some degree of modest but declining protection as you would expect, then this would conflict with the statement and effort of recommending that people get the updated bivalent BA.5 vaccine in September. In addition, it would undermine the DoJ's efforts at mandates for vaccines under certain circumstances. In any event, the CDC agreed to pull back on the statement of absolute lack of efficacy of vaccines against infections and transmission and take a more measured approach of saying that the vaccines provides only modest and waning efficacy against infection and transmission and that is why we should heed the advice of getting the updated booster in Sept. However, although they did this on their website, the MMWR that cam out yesterday had the same original damning language. **When Larry Horowitz and Ashish noticed this, Larry went off the wall and in a somewhat agitated manner called me up this AM and said that this is the last straw and he was sure that when Ron Klain gets back from Spain this weekend he would fire Rochelle.** Ashish was more measured and seems to have come to the conclusion that sooner or later (maybe not right now) Rochelle would have to go. Let us see what happens…..probably nothing

Fauci retired in December. His problems have not ended in the three and a half years since. There is still no serious reckoning with what happened. The release of this giant manuscript is a beginning as are the hearings held by Senator Rand Paul. It's a moment of revelation, catharsis, truth-telling, and coming to terms with the disaster created in these years from which the nation and the world have yet to recover.

Every citizen needs to read these diaries, slowly while reliving one's own experience. Keep in mind that the suffering of the people is never noted in all these pages. But they were noted in your own life, bitterly etched in your memory. Even in the next century, there will be people talking about their two terrible years in childhood, forced to wear a mask and then jabbed with gene therapy.

Anthony Fauci sought immortality through power and fame. His only power now is his right to remain silent; his immortality is earned in infamy.

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Noah Webster Saw the Danger

An Electorate Too Ignorant to Govern Itself

By Lisa Bennett

In the early years of the American republic, Noah Webster—lexicographer, educator, and fierce advocate for national identity—issued a blunt warning about democracy's weakest link: an uninformed people. In his essay "On the Education of Youth in America" (1788), later included in *A Collection of Essays and Fugitiv Writings on Moral, Historical, Political and Literary Subjects* (Boston: I. Thomas and E.T. Andrews, 1790), Webster wrote:

"I have known instructions from the inhabitants of a county, two thirds of whom could not write their names. How competent must such men be to decide an important point in legislation!"

In the early years of the American republic, Noah Webster—lexicographer, educator, and fierce advocate for national identity—didn't mince words and issued a blunt warning about democracy's weakest link: an uninformed people. In 1788, the man who would later give America its dictionary looked at the new republic and saw a serious flaw. He had watched entire counties send formal instructions to their legislators even though two-thirds of the men signing those papers could not write their own names. "How competent must such men be to decide an important point in legislation!" he asked, the sarcasm unmistakable.

Webster's larger argument was straightforward. Several states had adopted republican constitutions that gave ordinary citizens the right to vote and to guide their representatives. Yet those same states made little provision for teaching the poorer ranks of people to read and write, let alone understand the principles of government. The constitutions were republican, he said, while the education laws remained monarchical. In a system where government rests in the hands of the people, knowledge must be widely diffused through schools and newspapers. Without it, voters would mistake their own interests and push lawmakers toward blunders.

He was not calling for the vote to be taken away. He was insisting that a free people who lack the knowledge to govern themselves well will not remain free for long.

That warning lands with fresh force today. The basic literacy problem Webster described has largely been solved. Almost every American adult can write a signature. Yet large numbers of voters still lack a working grasp of how their government actually functions.

Annual surveys from the Annenberg Public Policy Center show persistent gaps. In recent years, the share of U.S. adults able to name all three branches of the federal government has fluctuated between roughly half and 70 percent. Significant minorities cannot name even one. Other polls routinely find that many citizens struggle to identify basic constitutional provisions, the length of senatorial terms, or the difference between the House and Senate. Voter knowledge of candidates' actual policy positions is often weaker still, especially when mediated through short-form social media, partisan cable news, and algorithmically amplified outrage.

Today the barriers include information overload, selective media diets, and declining trust in institutions. More fundamentally, critics from conservative and critical perspectives—such as the Heritage Foundation, the Pacific Research Institute, the Educational Freedom Institute, and analyses highlighted by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression—point to a pronounced left-leaning or progressive skew in public education and academia. Studies of political contributions and ideological self-identification among educators show that a significant majority of politically active faculty and higher-education donors lean progressive or Democratic, with university faculty ratios often reaching 8:1 or higher and donation ratios far more extreme. In K-12 settings, teachers also lean left of the general population, though less monolithically than professors. These organizations contend that certain curricula, library materials, and social studies frameworks omit traditional patriotic values, downplay key historical contexts, or present history through a biased lens that prioritizes ideological conditioning over neutral civic education. The result is that many students emerge without solid grounding in civics or balanced history—or with versions of history that critics say depart from the truth—leaving large numbers of future voters to form firm opinions, and sometimes issue emphatic "instructions" via social media, primaries, or referendums, on matters they understand only partially.

Webster worried that unlettered constituents would push legislators toward short-sighted or self-defeating measures. Contemporary examples are not hard to find on either side of the political spectrum: support for policies whose fiscal or constitutional consequences are poorly grasped; susceptibility to conspiracy narratives; or the elevation of symbolic fights over durable institutional reforms. As in Webster's time, ignorance is rarely pure malice. It is more often the predictable outcome of systems that demand participation without ensuring the knowledge required for competent participation.

Webster understood that self-government is demanding. It requires more than the right to vote. It requires citizens who know enough to judge the laws they help create and the people they send to write them. Schools and a free press, he believed, were the essential instruments for spreading that knowledge.

The tools have changed. The danger has not. When large numbers of voters lack the information or the historical grounding to evaluate the decisions placed before them, the quality of self-government inevitably suffers. Webster saw the risk clearly more than two centuries ago. The question is whether we still do.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6

Table 1. Campaign Contributions in Republican Dominated States (Professors)

	Partisan Split of Contributions		
	From Professors		Republican Share of State
	Democrat	Republican	
ND	99%	1%	87%
WI	98%	2%	65%
PA	98%	2%	50%
AR	98%	2%	82%
NH	97%	3%	51%
MO	96%	4%	69%
OH	96%	4%	68%
IN	96%	4%	70%
IA	95%	5%	64%
KY	95%	5%	80%
GA	94%	6%	57%
AZ	94%	6%	53%
NE	93%	7%	67%
OK	92%	8%	80%
WV	92%	8%	89%
NC	90%	10%	60%
AL	90%	10%	73%
SD	90%	10%	90%
FL	89%	11%	70%
ID	87%	13%	84%
TX	86%	14%	57%
TN	85%	15%	76%
AK	83%	17%	63%
WY	82%	18%	92%
UT	80%	20%	81%
KS	78%	22%	68%
SC	77%	23%	71%
MT	73%	27%	68%
LA	72%	28%	70%
MS	22%	78%	66%

Table 2. Campaign Contributions in Republican Dominated States (K-12 Teachers)

	Partisan Split of Contributions		
	From K-12 Teachers		Republican Share of State
	Democrat	Republican	
WI	87%	13%	65%
AZ	79%	21%	53%
NC	77%	23%	60%
NE	73%	27%	67%
AK	72%	28%	63%
IN	70%	30%	70%
IA	68%	32%	64%
WY	66%	34%	92%
KY	63%	37%	80%
WV	63%	37%	89%
OH	62%	38%	68%
KS	61%	39%	68%
SC	61%	39%	71%
LA	59%	41%	70%
MS	56%	44%	66%
TX	53%	47%	57%
AR	51%	49%	82%
TN	51%	49%	76%
MT	50%	50%	68%
NH	49%	51%	51%
SD	46%	54%	90%
FL	43%	57%	70%
GA	41%	59%	57%
ID	38%	62%	84%
PA	33%	67%	50%
OK	31%	69%	80%
AL	28%	72%	73%
ND	26%	74%	87%
UT	26%	74%	81%
MO	23%	77%	69%

Harvard's Fraud Case Sounds Alarm for Montana:
ARE UNIVERSITY GRANTS AT RISK?

By Staff Writer

Harvard University's legal troubles over allegedly falsifying information in NIH grant applications could lead to multimillion-dollar penalties. This alarming situation is not confined to Ivy League corridors—it's a stark warning for Montana's universities, which rely heavily on similar federal funding for critical research projects.

The scandal underscores the importance of rigorous oversight. Montana's institutions are deeply invested in federally funded research across various sectors, including health, environment, and technology. For instance, NIH grants support vital health studies addressing rural healthcare, while EPA funds drive essential environmental research in Montana's unique ecosystems. NSF grants aid in technological advancements that are crucial for regional development.

If errors or falsehoods in grant applications occur here as they allegedly did at Harvard, the financial and reputational repercussions could be severe. Montana's universities may find themselves in the precarious position of needing to repay substantial sums, thereby jeopardizing future research efforts.

Existing Audit Procedures and Gaps

Currently, Montana's universities do have audit procedures, but their effectiveness can vary. These audits are meant to ensure compliance and accuracy in grant-related activities. However, the intensity and thoroughness of these audits might not be sufficient to catch all errors or misrepresentations.

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Risks and Exposures for Taxpayers

Without comprehensive and stringent audit systems, Montana taxpayers face significant exposure. The risk is not just financial, repayment of grants could divert funds from other crucial areas, impacting education and research advancements. The state's academic reputation could also be at stake.

Recommended Actions and Possible Legislation to Strengthening Oversight

To mitigate these risks, Montana needs to reinforce its auditing procedures. Establishing more robust internal controls and external reviews can help verify the accuracy of grant applications and funded research.

Implement laws requiring detailed audits and setting penalties for non-compliance. Legislation could mandate regular independent audits of university grant processes and impose stricter reporting standards to ensure transparency. Legislating for accountability measures such as whistleblower protections can encourage reporting of any misconduct, safeguarding against potential fraud.

Harvard's legal issues highlight an urgent need for vigilance in grant administration. Montana's universities must act proactively to safeguard their funding and reputation, ensuring that similar crises do not arise closer to home. Strengthening these measures will help Montana continue its valuable contributions to research without the fear of financial or reputational repercussions looming.

An Open Letter to Llew Jones

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Llew,

With all due respect, enough, when it comes to your dogged determination to unlawfully entrench yourself as a Montana legislator in blatant defiance of term limits. Term limits are clearly defined in Article IV, section 8 of The Constitution of the State of Montana.

With all of the vainglory you regularly exhibit regarding your education, intelligence, and penchant for numbers, one would think that you would have the ability to read and comprehend the aforementioned Article IV, section 8.

Term limits described as 8 or more years within any 16 year period, seems quite obviously, to be an example of plain and clear usage of the English language, and calculating 8 or more years within any 16 year period seems basic arithmetic.

I am not without respect for you, so if that is a concern of yours, it needn't be. I am concerned, however, that should you continue on your current course of action, you risk making an absolute mockery of yourself, and for that, you shall have only yourself to blame.

Admittedly, my greater concern is, the absolute disrespect that you now exhibit towards every Montanan, and the mockery you make of the very same Constitution, which you have on multiple occasions, sworn to protect and defend.

You have defied court orders before when they were unconstitutional. However, with Abbot's decision, you say "The Judge put it pretty cleanly – you don't move the goalposts in the middle of the game." Your practice of flouting term limits is not a game. Further, this is not a matter of moving goalposts, rather, you are seeking to impose entirely new rules upon our government for the purposes of serving your own self-interests.

Let me remind you the Judge also wrote that a "purely literal reading" of the constitution leads to the legal opinion reached by Knudsen. The constitution is a document comprised of words. A literal reading is entirely reasonable, especially in this case.

Steve Bullocks 2012 opinion, which reportedly, included a personal invention of an eight year break, was an extra-constitutional contrivance. Certain representatives, including yourself, emboldened by that opinion, have knowingly made the violation of term limits standard practice. That does not make it lawful.

You used Bullock's opinion as justification for your unlawful actions, and when Attorney General Knudson provided his opinion you maintained that it was not for him to decide. Why then, according to you, was Bullock's opinion one of authority? The answer is clear, because it served you.

Montanan's have been clear about term limits, and the constitution is clear, and we don't appreciate self-serving, entitled, career-politicians that operate outside of the bounds of the law while expecting everyday Montanan's to adhere to the law.

Again, I am not without respect for you. However, I respectfully ask you to strongly consider having some respect for yourself, and the constitution, before you erode the peoples trust in our government to an even further degree.

Cordially,
Nate White

Enough

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Overcome darkness, dispel the fringe llewnatics

By Montana Mind

Another election cycle, and with it, the standard ghoulish parade. Emerging from cold darkness, to shake your hand in broad daylight. Enter the bloated candidates; They seek to do the same to your government. They run with blatant disregard for both term limits, and general decency alike. Whether they don't know what logical fallacies are, or they're just especially fond of them, is anyone's guess. The probability that many of these debased creatures have entirely forgotten that there is a guiding document called the Montana state constitution is high. The lack of remembrance being the result of pharmaceutical drug addiction, may be even higher.

Again, they've just told you, that they have saved rural hospitals. However, one nurse, after another, tells you to avoid the hospitals. Such avoidance, they warn, may just save your life. To your own eyes, many of the candidates don't appear to be health experts. In fact, some cut images of beings unfit to provide health advice to toxic waste dumps, and when they speak, you're not certain they're even human. You question your memory. You seem to remember when the people of Montana were healthy. On the street corner five people are lost to their screens.

In place of sustenance, children are served bio-engineered cafeteria food, and you wonder if that somehow fulfills their right to a clean and healthful environment. You suppress such thoughts though, because a pretense of dignity seems a better version, than none at all. At least there's the meadowlark's song you tell yourself. However, you aren't quite able to entirely vanquish, from deep within yourself, concern that it may not survive the data center – and you don't consent.

And, all this time, you can almost hear a distant hum from a faraway printing factory, while you behold, an army of signs, printed byproducts of industry, red white and blue, and rainbow colors too. They march along the boulevards and ambush you along the back roads. It's enough – you retreat to the solitude of home. Where alas, you've been robo-called again.

Why are we so tired, and what can we do about it? At M.T. Minds – Nate White for Montana, we are of the mind that delusion and denial are exhausting. We believe assessing and accepting where we are is necessary to improving our quality of life. We believe that many of our state representatives knowingly disregard Montanan's unalienable rights. They have broken our trust, and we can do better. Their back-alley dealings are impoverishing us. We seek to help make Montana affordable again for everyday Montanans like us. We seeks to resurrect our vanishing dignity.

Pandering to out-of state-tourists is not sustainable, it is a road map to a prostitution colony. We value both industry and a healthy and clean environment – we need both. We are reviewing a simplified tax plan that will eliminate property taxes. We support secure housing for Montana residents. In 1950, 70% of the food consumed in Montana was grown or raised in Montana. Today, 3% of the food consumed in Montana is grown or raised in Montana. We are told to feed the world. We need to feed ourselves first – with healthy food.

Montana representatives prioritize telegraphing ruling-class-agendas into our homes, before ever considering serving us. Montana representatives seek to deny farmers the right to repair and modify their own equipment. We believe that Montanans are better served if we protect the freedom of our farmers, ranchers and mechanics, along with every other Montanan.

We believe that a healthy Montana is imperative, rather than a pipe-dream. Together, we can both get back to basics, and innovate!

This fall, overcome darkness; WRITE-IN NATE WHITE (Senate District 9, Montana)

The Iron Curtain of the Montana GOP: Who Is Really Running the Circus?

A party that claims to defend freedom and capitalism now faces questions about consolidated power, repeated lawsuits, political loyalty tests, and whether grassroots Republicans still have a voice.

By Staff Writer

The Montana Republican Party has every right to promote its platform, expect candidates to understand and support its principles, and hold elected officials accountable when they abandon the promises made to voters. A political party that never enforces its principles eventually becomes little more than a label on a ballot.

But there is a difference between defending a platform and demanding unquestioning obedience. There is a difference between holding candidates accountable and punishing every Republican who disagrees with party leadership. There is also a difference between maintaining standards and building an internal political machine in which power is concentrated at the top, dissent is treated as disloyalty, and only dependable "yes" men and women are allowed into the approved ranks. That distinction is at the center of the growing controversy surrounding the Montana Republican Party.

Who Is Really Running the Montana GOP?

Deborah "Debbie" Churchill holds three influential positions within the Montana Republican Party: National Committeewoman, interim Chief Operating Officer, and Executive Director. Those positions represent different forms of authority. As National Committeewoman, Churchill represents Montana within the Republican National Committee and participates in the state party's leadership structure. As interim Chief Operating Officer, she serves in the party's central administrative chain of command, with influence over personnel, records, operations, resources, and budget-related decisions. As Executive Director, she oversees the party's day-to-day operations, staff, communications, and programs. Unlike an honorary title, the executive director position is paid.

A report concerning the Montana GOP's litigation over Republican state senators identified Churchill as the party's interim Chief Operating Officer and a member of the party's executive board. The report also stated that Churchill submitted a declaration in the litigation and that questions concerning her discipline for surreptitiously recording conversations at party headquarters were raised during courtroom questioning. NBC Montana

When one person holds three overlapping leadership positions, the issue is not merely personal ambition. It is institutional accountability. Who supervises Churchill? Who reviews her decisions? Who controls party records? Who approves legal expenses? Who oversees budget-related decisions? Who investigates complaints involving her? Who determines whether she must recuse herself from matters in which she is personally involved? The Montana GOP may have answers to these questions, but grassroots members should not have to guess.

The concentration of authority is particularly important because the executive director and chief operating officer can influence the party's daily machinery, including staff, communications, financial administration, legal coordination, access to records, and relationships with county organizations. When the same person also sits on the executive board and represents Montana nationally, the lines between administration, governance, political strategy, and internal discipline can become blurred. That is where the conflict-of-interest concerns begin.

Is Art Wittich Running the Party—or Is Churchill Running the Machinery?

Art Wittich remains chairman of the Montana Republican Party. But formal titles do not always reveal where practical power resides. A chairman may serve as the public face and political leader of an organization, while an executive director and chief operating officer control much of its daily operation. The person who manages staff, communicates with county committees, handles internal records, coordinates legal matters, and directs party resources may exercise enormous influence, even when another person holds the title of chairman.

That raises a legitimate question: Is Art Wittich

directing the operations of the Montana GOP, or has practical control shifted to Churchill through the accumulation of multiple overlapping positions?

This is not a claim that Churchill automatically makes every decision. It is a question about the structure of power. When one person is simultaneously a national representative, executive-board member, chief operating officer, and executive director, she is positioned near virtually every major function of the organization.

If Churchill is involved in an internal dispute, her multiple roles could place her near the party's operational response, public messaging, financial decisions, staff activity, legal strategy, and disciplinary processes connected to that dispute. Even if party officials believe each decision is proper, the arrangement can undermine public confidence when no independent person or body is available to review her conduct. A system in which one official can influence a dispute, administer the response, control information, and help determine the party's legal or political position demands transparency and independent oversight.

The Anderson Disenfranchisement

The most serious matter addressed in this article is the disenfranchisement of Thomas Anderson. Anderson was a longtime Carbon County voter and Republican who intended to seek the chairmanship of the Carbon County Republican Central Committee. His voter registration had remained in Carbon County for more than a decade. Then, in September 2023, his registration was moved from Carbon County to Yellowstone County without his knowledge or consent. He learned of the change only after it had occurred.

The transfer was not politically neutral. It changed the county in which Anderson was registered, affected his eligibility to seek Carbon County Republican leadership, and removed him from the political contest he intended to enter. His wife reportedly remained registered in Carbon County, as did neighboring residents whose circumstances were said to be similar. The result was clear: Anderson was prevented from competing for leadership in the county where he had been registered and politically active for years.

Anderson maintains that Churchill was involved in communications surrounding the transfer. When he confronted Churchill, rather than ensuring that he received notice and a meaningful opportunity to challenge the change, she directed him elsewhere while the registration change remained in effect. This was disenfranchisement. Anderson's voter registration was moved across county lines without his knowledge or consent, and the change directly prevented him from seeking local party leadership. The action benefited those who opposed his candidacy and deprived Anderson of equal participation in the political process.

Election-administration procedures exist to maintain accurate voter records. They must never be used as a political tool to remove a rival from a leadership contest. If a person knowingly causes a voter's registration to be moved to prevent that voter from participating in a political contest, the conduct is not merely unethical. It may constitute a felony under applicable election law.

Platform Enforcement Is Legitimate. Political Purges Are Not.

The Montana Republican Party should expect Republican candidates to understand and support its platform. Candidates should not campaign as Republicans while deliberately promising voters the opposite of what the party stands for. Voters deserve to know whether candidates support the principles under which they seek office.

But support for the platform must not become personal loyalty to party officials. A platform is a statement of principles, not a loyalty oath to a chairman, executive director, faction, or inner circle. A Republican legislator may agree with the party's general principles while disagreeing with a particular bill, procedure, or leadership decision. A county chair may support the platform while criticizing the state party. A grassroots volunteer may believe party leaders mishandled a controversy without becoming an enemy of the Republican Party. That is not betrayal. It is political participation.

Republicans have always included farmers, business owners, veterans, social conservatives, constitutional conservatives, libertarians, populists, and independent-minded citizens who do not agree on every issue. That diversity is not necessarily weakness. It is part of a living political movement.

A party that requires total agreement on every question will eventually have no members left except those afraid to speak.

Founding-Era Warnings About Party Power

The concern over concentrated political power is not new. The founders understood that political parties could become dangerous when loyalty to faction replaced loyalty to principle. In *Federalist No. 10*, James Madison warned that faction could produce "instability, injustice and confusion" and allow a powerful majority to disregard the rights of a weaker minority. Madison did not argue that disagreement should be eliminated. He argued that a constitutional system must prevent any faction from using its power to oppress others.

George Washington issued an even stronger warning in his Farewell Address. He cautioned that political parties could become "potent engines" through which ambitious and unprincipled leaders might "subvert the Power of the People" and seize control for themselves. Washington warned that unchecked faction could eventually cause citizens to seek security under the absolute power of one individual, creating what he called "a more formal and permanent despotism."

Those warnings remain relevant whenever party leaders treat disagreement as disloyalty, concentrate authority in a small inner circle, or use organizational rules to silence competing voices. A political party may establish standards and require candidates to support its platform, but it must never confuse principled accountability with personal obedience.

The Iron Curtain Metaphor

The phrase "iron curtain" describes the divide between those inside the approved circle and those outside it-between party insiders who are protected and grassroots members who are disciplined, excluded, or ignored. The comparison highlights a political danger: a movement that claims to defend liberty can undermine its own credibility when it responds to disagreement with exclusion, retaliation, or forced conformity. The historical comparison to Lenin and other communist leaders is not a claim that the Montana Republican Party is communist. It is a warning about the dangers of centralized power.

Political movements that begin by claiming to protect principles can become controlled by a small faction that demands loyalty, eliminates opposition, and treats independent thought as a threat. A party cannot campaign against authoritarianism while practicing authoritarian habits internally. It cannot defend capitalism while concentrating organizational power in fewer and fewer hands. It cannot denounce government overreach while claiming authority to control elected officials beyond what the law permits.

Most importantly, it cannot demand that voters respect elections while using internal procedures to override the political participation of people who challenge party leadership. The concern is not that the

(continued on page 11A)

IRON CURTAIN (from page 10A)

Republican Party has standards. The concern is that those standards may be enforced selectively—strictly against opponents and leniently toward allies. That is how an organization moves from principled discipline to political control.

The Lawsuits Are Becoming the Message

The Montana Republican Party has repeatedly found itself in court over internal conflicts involving party leadership, elected officials, membership, bylaws, candidate qualifications, and participation rights.

One lawsuit involved Republican state senators who were blocked from participating in the election of party leadership. The dispute raised questions about whether party officials exceeded their authority and whether elected legislators were denied a fair opportunity to participate in party proceedings. Other litigation has involved challenges to party bylaws and allegations that internal rules give state party officials excessive control over local committees, elected officials, candidates, and members.

Lawsuits are sometimes necessary. A political organization has a right to defend itself when challenged. But repeated litigation over internal party disputes should cause members to ask whether the organization is being governed effectively. Every lawsuit consumes money, staff time, legal resources, and political energy. Those resources could otherwise be used to support county committees, recruit volunteers, communicate with voters, and help Republican candidates win elections.

When party money is repeatedly used to fight internal opponents, grassroots members deserve to know who approved the litigation, how much has been spent, whether officials involved in the underlying dispute participated in approving the legal response, and whether anyone was required to recuse themselves.

These financial questions are especially important when the party's chief operating officer and executive director also hold positions within its governing structure. If one person has influence over party operations, budget-related decisions, internal disputes, and legal strategy, independent review is necessary to ensure that party resources are not being used to protect a faction or retaliate against political opponents. Those questions are not attacks on the Republican Party. They are basic standards of financial and organizational accountability.

The Churchill Controversy Over Surveillance Equipment at GOP Headquarters

A separate concern involves secret recording at Montana Republican Party headquarters. During courtroom questioning, an attorney asked whether a witness knew that Churchill had been disciplined for surreptitiously recording conversations at party headquarters. The witness testified that she did not know about the discipline. The report does not provide the complete disciplinary record or establish every detail concerning the equipment, the recordings, or whether criminal charges were filed.

The public deserves to know whether the recording involved audio, video, or both; who authorized the equipment; what was recorded; who had access to the recordings; and whether any recordings were used in internal party disputes. The issue is especially important because Churchill was serving in an operational leadership role while also sitting on the party's executive board. If the party disciplined her, members should be told who conducted the investigation, what findings were made, and whether the same standards would have been applied to an ordinary volunteer or political opponent.

Churchill is an attorney. She should understand the legal and ethical concerns surrounding private communications and undisclosed recording. If ordinary grassroots members would face discipline for similar conduct, party leaders should not receive different treatment. That is the concern reflected in the phrase, "rules for thee, but not for me." Whether that phrase accurately describes the party's internal culture is a question the MTGOP must answer through transparency and consistent enforcement. A political party that claims to defend privacy, constitutional rights, and due process should not treat secret surveillance as a trivial workplace disagreement.

Due Process Cannot Depend on Political Loyalty

Grassroots members have raised broader concerns about selective enforcement of party rules, precinct membership, county central committees, voter-registration disputes, and the treatment of political opponents. Some disputes involve claims that conservatives were aggressively challenged or removed while allies of party leadership received more favorable treatment.

The Anderson matter demonstrates why those concerns cannot be dismissed out of hand. When a voter's registration is moved from one county to another without his knowledge or consent, and the result is to prevent him from seeking local party office, the matter is no longer merely a disagreement over party rules. It is a question of political rights.

Due process requires clear rules, notice of the alleged violation, an opportunity to respond, a fair hearing, consistent enforcement, and a written decision. Anyone personally involved in the underlying dispute should be required to recuse themselves from the investigation or final decision.

No member should be removed from party participation through secret accusations, undisclosed evidence, or decisions made by people who are also political opponents. The party cannot demand loyalty from its members while denying them the fairness it expects from government institutions. It cannot insist that public officials follow the rule of law while operating its own internal affairs through unwritten rules, selective enforcement, and personal retaliation.

Dissent Is Not Disloyalty

The MTGOP's platform should matter. Candidates should be expected to support it honestly. But supporting a platform does not require surrendering independent judgment. An elected Republican official may agree with the party's general principles while disagreeing with a specific bill or leadership decision. A county leader may support Republican candidates while criticizing the state party. A grassroots volunteer may believe the organization mishandled a controversy without becoming a Democrat. That is not betrayal. It is the exercise of political freedom.

The word "dissent" should not be treated as a synonym for disloyalty. In a constitutional republic, dissent is one of the ways leaders are held accountable.

No one should be sent to the political "gulag"—expelled, blacklisted, publicly denounced, or deprived of party support—simply because they ask questions or refuse to repeat the official line. The party must distinguish between abandoning its platform, supporting an opposing party's agenda, engaging in misconduct, expressing an honest policy disagreement, criticizing party leadership, and exercising independent judgment as an elected official. Those categories are not interchangeable.

A Better Definition of Party Unity

The Montana Republican Party can defend its platform without alienating its grassroots. It can give candidates the platform in writing and ask them to explain where they agree and where they differ. It can inform voters when candidates depart from Republican principles and endorse candidates who faithfully represent the party's stated values. It can promote unity without eliminating healthy disagreement. It can resolve internal disputes through transparency, due process, and open debate rather than endless lawsuits and political retaliation. The choice is between a party of principles, and a party of control seeking power through authoritarian methods reminiscent of communist movements across the world.

But it must also provide fair procedures. Members accused of violating party rules should receive notice and a meaningful opportunity to respond. Officials personally involved in a dispute should recuse themselves. Legal spending should be transparent, and party finances should be reported to the membership. County committees should retain meaningful authority, and elected officials should not be treated as though their first obligation is to party administrators rather than the voters who elected them.

Most importantly, the party should protect good-faith dissent.

That would be real party unity—not enforced silence.

The real test of a political movement is not whether it can force conformity. The real test is whether it can tolerate disagreement while remaining united around legitimate principles.

The Choice Before the Montana GOP

The Montana Republican Party says it stands for freedom, individual responsibility, limited government, capitalism, constitutional rights, and the rule of law. Those principles cannot exist only in campaign speeches. They must also govern the party's internal operations.

When a party concentrates authority in a small leadership circle, treats dissent as betrayal, uses internal procedures to eliminate political competition, and repeatedly turns to the courts to defend its own internal power struggles, it risks becoming the very kind of political machine its members claim to oppose. The greatest danger is not disagreement within a political party. The greatest danger is when one faction gains enough control to punish disagreement, manipulate participation, and convince members that obedience is the same thing as unity. That is how free movements lose their freedom—not all at once, but one silenced voice, one closed meeting, one selective enforcement action, and one concentrated office of power at a time.

Deborah Churchill's simultaneous positions make these concerns especially urgent. Her combined authority raises questions about who controls party operations, personnel, records, budget-related decisions, legal strategy, communications, internal discipline, and the party's response to complaints involving its own leadership. Those questions should not be dismissed as disloyalty. They should be answered.

The Montana GOP does not need an iron curtain separating party leadership from the grassroots it claims to represent. It needs open meetings, transparent finances, fair hearings, independent investigations, consistent rules, and leaders who understand the difference between platform fidelity and personal allegiance.

The choice before the Montana Republican Party is not simply between competing personalities. It is between two different models of political organization: a party of principles, where leadership remains accountable to its members, or a party of control, where power is consolidated at the top and loyalty to the ruling faction matters more than loyalty to the people.

The Montana grassroots is watching. It is asking whether the party still belongs to its members—or whether members are now expected to serve the party leadership. The answer will not be revealed by speeches about freedom and capitalism. It will be revealed by whether the Montana GOP is willing to practice those principles inside its own walls. So many good Republicans are sick of the shenanigans of the MT GOP Leaderlessship. The grassroots are sick of the Republican Party and leaving it in droves.

Maybe it's time for a Tea Party.

THE DAILY INVESTIGATOR

Poisoned Foods

Outdated Rules, Industry Cash, and the FDA Loopholes Threatening American Health

SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE EXPOSÉ

By Investigative Reporting Desk

The "1% Rule" and the Cyanide Fallacy

When evaluating the safety of food additives and industrial compounds, regulatory agencies frequently rely on arbitrary concentration thresholds. Under current United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guidelines, certain additives—including colorants like titanium dioxide—are permitted in consumer products as long as they do not exceed 1% of the finished product's weight.

To the average consumer, "less than 1%" sounds negligible—a mere rounding error in mass production. However, toxicologists point out a fundamental flaw in using simple percentage caps as a primary safety buffer.

Consider a basic thought experiment: Potassium cyanide at a 1% concentration by weight in a standard food portion would deliver a fatal dose. Toxicity is governed by biological mechanisms, organ accumulation, and cellular reactions—not merely whether an ingredient stays below an arbitrary 1% cutoff.

Yet, for decades, regulatory thresholds have allowed chemicals to enter the food supply under the assumption that low volume equals low risk, even when those substances accumulate in human tissue over time.

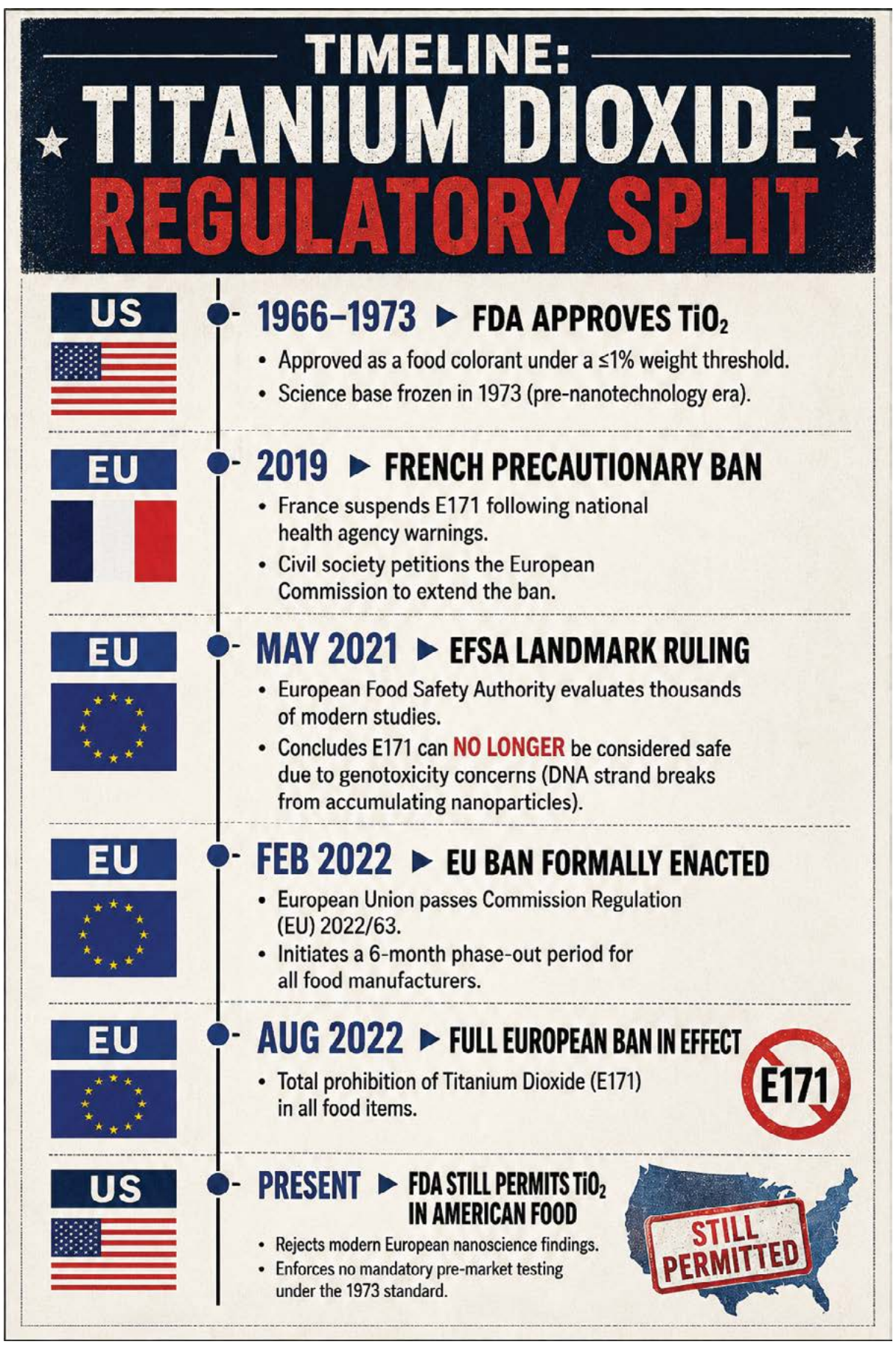
Decades-Old Science: Titanium Dioxide and the Nanoparticle Shift

Nowhere is this regulatory divide clearer than in the case of Titanium Dioxide (TiO_2)—a whitening agent used to give packaged foods, powdered sugars, coffee creamers, candies, and yogurts a bright, opaque appearance.

According to an analysis by *The Guardian* covering health advocates' efforts to ban the additive, the FDA originally approved titanium dioxide for food use in 1966 and last reviewed its safety in 1973—over 50 years ago. At that time, modern concepts of nanotechnology, cellular penetration, and DNA damage simply did not exist in regulatory testing protocols.

In the decades since 1973, scientific understanding of particulate matter has evolved dramatically. Today, researchers know that at least 24% of food-grade titanium dioxide consists of nanoparticles (particles smaller than 100 nanometers). Because of their micro-scale size, nanoparticles behave fundamentally differently inside the body than larger particles: they can pass through mucosal barriers, cross into the bloodstream, and accumulate over time in the liver, spleen, and kidneys.

As documented in a public health analysis by *USRTK*, the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) completed a landmark safety review in May 2021 examining thousands of modern scientific studies. The EFSA panel concluded that titanium dioxide could no longer be considered safe as a food additive because researchers could not rule out genotoxicity—the potential for nanoparticles to induce DNA strand breaks and chromosomal damage. Consequently, the European Union enacted a complete ban on TiO_2 (E171) in food products in 2022.



Despite these findings, the FDA continues to rely on its 1973 framework, leaving American consumers exposed to compounds that European regulators deemed unfit for human consumption.

Whiter Food vs. Healthy Food: Cosmetic Utility vs. Public Health

The persistence of titanium dioxide in the U.S. food supply raises an inevitable question: Is this additive even necessary?

Unlike preservatives, which prevent bacterial spoilage and extend shelf life, titanium dioxide serves a purely cosmetic purpose. It is added to food solely to make products look brighter, whiter, or more opaque.

According to a report on food additive alternatives by *Oterra*, food manufacturers traditionally rely on white additives as an opacifier to create pastel shades or add a visual perception of "creaminess" to processed foods. Yet, as consumer preference shifts toward clean-label and natural diets, major food scientists note that natural alternatives—such as calcium carbonate or simple rice starch—can achieve visual consistency without introducing engineered nanoparticles into the human body.

When weighing a purely aesthetic benefit against potential long-term genetic and organ risks, public health experts argue that sacrificing visual "whiteness" in favor of natural, unadulterated whole foods is a standard that modern consumers deserve.

The GRAS Loophole: How Ingredients Bypass FDA Review

The titanium dioxide debate highlights a broader structural problem within American regulatory oversight: the Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) framework.

According to a regulatory report by the *Institute*

(continued on page 13A)

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POISONED FOODS (from page 12A)

for Integrative Toxicology, the GRAS designation was originally created by Congress under the Food Additives Amendment of 1958 to exempt household staples—like vinegar, table salt, and baking soda—from undergoing lengthy pre-market approval processes.

However, a structural loophole allows commercial manufacturers to self-certify new synthetic chemicals and additives as GRAS:

- Self-Affirmation Pathway: Companies can hire their own panels of paid consultants to deem a substance "safe" internally, without being required to submit their findings to the FDA.
- Lack of Independent Oversight: Under current law, submitting a GRAS notification to the agency is completely voluntary. As a result, hundreds of synthetic additives enter the consumer market without independent FDA testing or public disclosure.

Following the Money: Regulatory Capture and Political Lobbying

To understand why the FDA's GRAS loophole remains untouched, one must look at the internal economics and political structure of federal food regulation.

For decades, public health advocates have pointed out that the FDA operates under a form of regulatory capture—a phenomenon where a state agency created to act in the public interest instead advances the commercial or political concerns of the industry it is tasked with regulating.

According to investigative reporting on the FDA's food division, the agency has historically treated food safety as a second-tier priority compared to pharmaceuticals and medical devices. While drug makers pay billions in user fees to fund FDA drug review processes, the agency's food program relies almost entirely on shrinking congressional budget allocations. This chronic underfunding has created an institutional incentive for the agency to offload the expensive, labor-intensive burden of safety testing directly onto food manufacturers.

The Revolving Door in Food Regulation

The legal mechanics that permanently crippled federal oversight began with an internal policy decision made by the FDA itself. In 1997, faced with growing backlogs and limited staff, the FDA abandoned formal GRAS affirmations in favor of a "voluntary notification system" (finalized in 2016). Under this rule, companies were no longer required to ask for FDA confirmation. If a manufacturer decided a chemical was safe, it could keep that decision entirely private—creating a "Secret GRAS" pathway where thousands of chemicals enter the U.S. market with zero mandatory premarket safety reviews.

Whenever public outrage or Congressional inquiries threaten to close this loophole, industry lobbying groups—such as the Consumer Brands Association (CBA) (formerly the Grocery Manufacturers Association) and specialized chemical coalitions—mobilize massive campaign resources to preserve self-certification:

1. Sponsoring "Preemption" Legislation: When individual U.S. states take independent action to ban harmful food chemicals (like Titanium Dioxide or Red Dye No. 3), industry groups lobby federal lawmakers to pass "Preemption" acts that strip states of their authority to ban additives while codifying weak federal oversight.
2. Deploying Conflict-of-Interest Panels: Public health studies analyzing voluntary GRAS notifications reveal that the scientific panels hired by food corporations to judge additive safety routinely have direct financial ties to the manufacturers—serving as employees, paid consultants, or contracted partners.
3. Blocking Government Audit Recommendations: As early as 2010, the *Government Accountability Office (GAO)* issued a scathing report warning that the FDA could not ensure the safety of GRAS chemicals and recommended mandatory notifications and conflict-of-interest bans. Over a decade later, intense industry lobbying has ensured those recommendations remain unfulfilled.

Even in the courts, public interest lawsuits attempting to force the FDA to shut down self-certification have hit legal walls, with judges ruling that while safety concerns are legitimate, only Congress possesses the statutory power to rewrite the underlying 1958 law.

A Modern Standard for Consumer Safety

Modern public health advocates argue that holding the regulatory system accountable is not an unreasonable expectation. Expecting federal regulators to reassess 1970s safety baselines, incorporate modern nanoscience, close self-certification loopholes, and prioritize health over cosmetic food additives is the baseline standard for consumer protection in an advanced society.

Flock Flack: When Surveillance Replaces Trust, Justice, and Moral Responsibility

A free society should be cautious whenever government asks citizens to surrender privacy in exchange for promises of safety.

By Staff Writer

The proposal is usually presented as straightforward: Install cameras, collect license-plate information, allow law enforcement to search the records, and crime will be reduced. Anyone who objects may be portrayed as suspicious, unreasonable, or unconcerned about public safety.

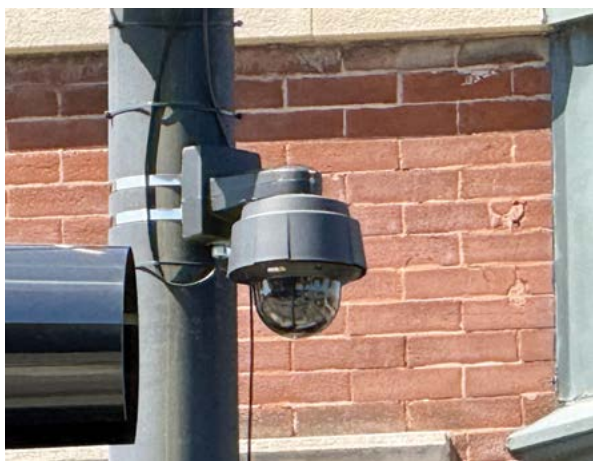
But the central question is not whether cameras can sometimes help solve crimes. Of course they can. The more important question is whether a constitutional republic should create searchable records of innocent people's movements without individualized suspicion, a warrant, meaningful public consent, or effective oversight.

That question is not merely about technology. It reaches into the Fourth Amendment, due process, the presumption of innocence, the right to confront witnesses, and the principle that government—not the accused—must prove its case.

It also raises a deeper question: What happens to a society when it attempts to solve a moral and spiritual crisis primarily through surveillance, databases, fines, and expanding government control?

Crime Is More Than a Security Problem

Crime is often treated as a problem of insufficient policing, inadequate technology, or ineffective social programs. Those issues may have some relevance, but they do not address the root of the problem.



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At its foundation, crime is a moral failure. It represents a breakdown in personal conscience and in the shared moral order that allows a society to live together in peace.

The Ten Commandments provide a clear framework for that moral order: "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," and "You shall not covet." These commandments establish duties toward God and neighbor. They are not merely suggestions or changing social preferences. They represent objective standards of right and wrong.

When belief in God and accountability to Him decline, moral responsibility often declines with them. Individuals begin to view right and wrong as subjective. Excuses multiply, personal responsibility weakens, and the conscience becomes less sensitive to wrongdoing.

A person who believes he will ultimately answer to God is more likely to exercise restraint even when no police officer, camera, or database is watching. External enforcement may restrain some conduct, but it cannot create virtue. A camera can record a theft; it cannot teach a person not to steal. A database can identify a vehicle; it cannot restore a broken conscience.

This is why widespread surveillance cannot substitute for moral renewal. Technology may help address certain crimes, but it cannot repair families, form character, restore honesty, or teach the next generation to respect the lives and property of others.

The Promise and Danger of Flock Cameras

This is the concern surrounding Flock Safety cameras and other automated license-plate-reader systems. The cameras do not photograph only suspected criminals. They record vehicles traveling through public places, including vehicles belonging to people who have committed no crime. Over time, individual images can become a searchable record of a person's movements. A single plate scan may appear harmless. A collection of scans can reveal where someone works, worships, shops, receives medical treatment, visits family, attends political meetings, or spends the night.

That is no longer simply a photograph. It is a map of a person's life.

The fact that the camera is placed near a public road does not eliminate every constitutional concern. The Fourth Amendment was written in response to broad government power to search people, homes, papers, and belongings based on general suspicion. The technology has changed, but the danger of indiscriminate government surveillance remains familiar.

Flock states that its system collects license-plate images, vehicle characteristics, timestamps, and camera locations rather than names, facial-recognition data, or biometric information. The company also describes access controls, search logging, and data-retention policies.

Those safeguards may be helpful, but policies are not the same as constitutional limits. A policy can be changed. An administrator can reinterpret it. A new contract can expand access. A data-sharing agreement can connect one agency's system to another.

A system created to locate stolen vehicles may eventually be used to investigate minor offenses, traffic violations, civil disputes, immigration matters, political activity, or other conduct never mentioned when the cameras were approved.

Once surveillance infrastructure exists, pressure to expand its use is difficult to resist.

Once surveillance infrastructure exists, it is rarely left alone. Agencies seek to expand their budgets, administrators look for additional uses, and elected officials are often reluctant to dismantle a program identified with public safety. A system approved to locate stolen vehicles can gradually be extended to traffic enforcement, revenue collection, civil investigations, and other purposes never presented to the public at the outset. Each expansion may be defended as reasonable, but the cumulative result is a permanent surveillance network with ever-broadening authority.

Mapping the Watchers: The DeFlock Controversy

The debate has escalated beyond traffic poles and town halls into a battle over basic transparency. When the citizen-led initiative DeFlock began mapping the locations of public surveillance cameras, the backlash from industry proponents was immediate and telling.

This isn't simply about solving crime anymore. It is about building an increasingly comprehensive picture of where vehicles travel, when they travel, and how artificial intelligence can connect those movements. If these cameras are installed in public spaces using taxpayer dollars, why shouldn't the public know where they are? That is the question DeFlock is asking, and asking it, apparently, has led critics to label citizen mappers as security threats.

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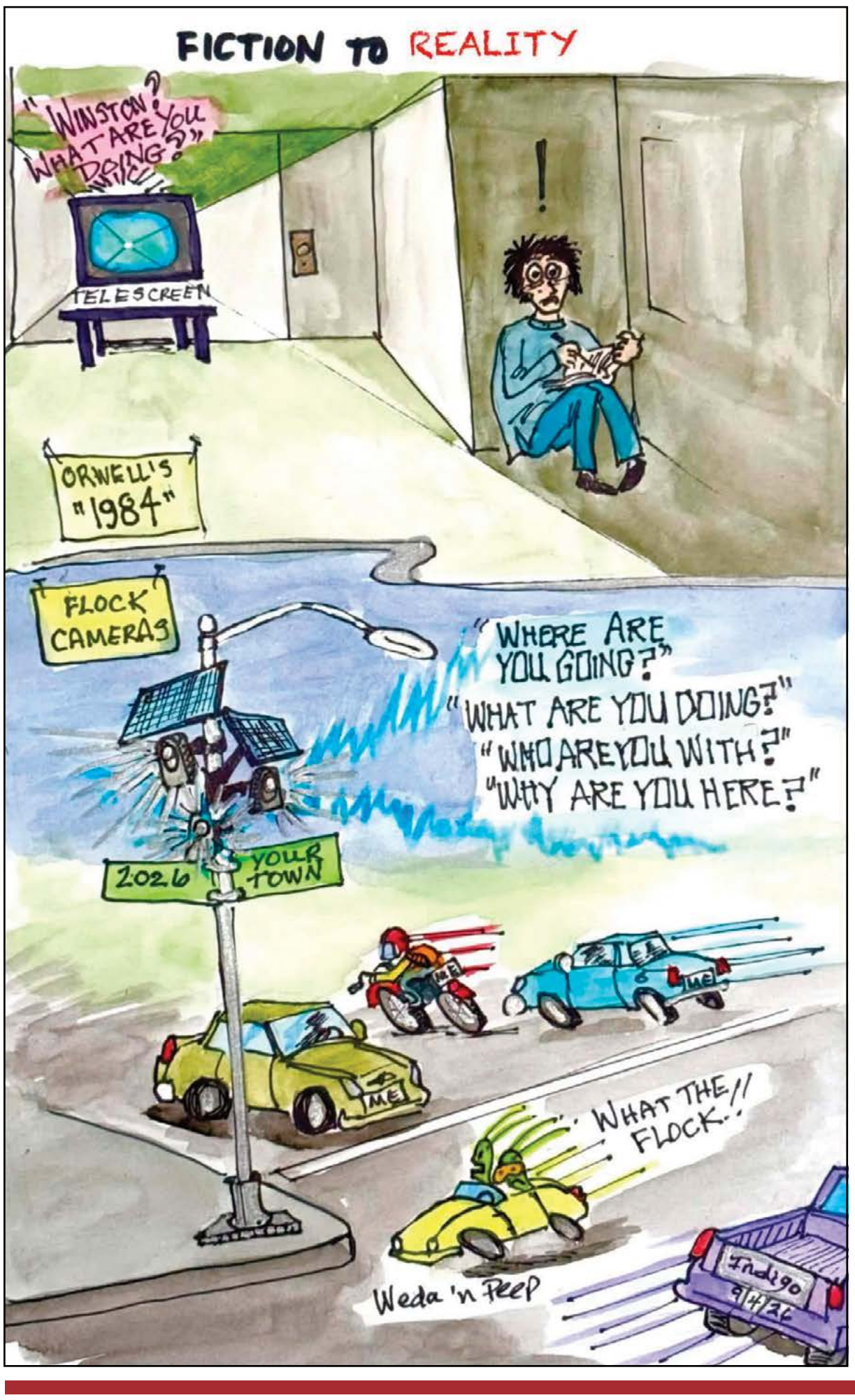

FLOCK FLACK (from page 14A)

It is a question the surveillance industry appears increasingly uncomfortable answering. The most revealing part of the controversy is what it exposes about the mindset behind the technology: when someone maps surveillance cameras, the cameras aren't questioned; the person documenting them is. This represents an extraordinary inversion. The debate shifts away from whether expanding surveillance deserves public scrutiny and toward whether the citizens demanding accountability are somehow the threat.

When Public Safety Becomes a Revenue Strategy

The concerns become even more serious when municipalities use surveillance technology not only to investigate serious crimes, but also to generate revenue through citations, fines, fees, and collection costs. A system promoted as a public-safety tool can gradually become a financial strategy. Once officials begin counting citations as income, the central question changes from "Does this make the public safer?" to "How much money can this system produce?"

That transformation is morally and constitutionally dangerous. Government exists to protect the public, administer justice, and preserve individual rights—not to treat citizens as sources of revenue. A municipality should never be financially rewarded for increasing the number of people it accuses, especially when automated cameras and plate readers may not establish who was driving, what actually happened, or whether a violation was intentional.

Revenue-based enforcement creates a conflict between public safety and financial gain. It can encourage officials to place cameras where they will generate the most citations rather than where they are most needed. It can also promote enforcement based on volume instead of accuracy, punish people who were not responsible for an alleged violation, and place the greatest burden on working families, elderly residents, and low-income citizens.

Many people pay questionable citations simply because fighting them requires time away from work, transportation, legal knowledge, or the ability to appear in court. When the cost of contesting an accusation exceeds the penalty itself, the system rewards payment rather than truth. Additional fees, collection costs, license suspensions, and court expenses can turn one disputed notice into a cycle of financial hardship.

Such systems also risk undermining the presumption of innocence. Instead of the government proving a violation through reliable evidence, the citizen may receive a demand for payment and then be forced to prove why the government's record is wrong. That reverses the proper relationship between the people and the state.

From a moral standpoint, using public authority to maximize revenue is especially troubling. The Ten Commandments condemn stealing, bearing false witness, coveting, and oppression. Government does not escape those principles simply because money is collected through a legal notice. Legal authority alone does not make every use of that authority just. Enforcement must also be honest, proportionate, transparent, and directed toward a legitimate public purpose.

A system that turns alleged wrongdoing into projected income creates a built-in temptation to expand accusations, reduce meaningful review, and resist reforms that would reduce collections. What begins as a tool to locate stolen vehicles may eventually be used for traffic enforcement, parking violations, debt collection, civil penalties, or other purposes never clearly disclosed to the public.

Citizens therefore have a right to know how these systems are funded and operated. Municipalities should disclose the cost of the cameras, the amount collected through fines and fees, payments made to private vendors, the number of notices issued and dismissed, the number sent to collections, and where the money ultimately goes. A program described as a public-safety measure should demonstrate measurable safety benefits—not merely financial returns.

Public safety must never become a blank check for revenue collection. Municipalities should not design surveillance programs around revenue projections or reward agencies based on the number of citations generated. Any penalties should be incidental to a legitimate public-safety purpose, not the reason the system exists. No person should be fined or subjected to additional punishment based solely on an automated record that fails to establish identity, responsibility, intent, and an actual violation.

"Guard with jealous attention the public liberty. Suspect everyone who approaches that jewel. Unfortunately, nothing will preserve it but downright force. Whenever you give up that force, you are inevitably ruined."
-Patrick Henry

When government turns surveillance into revenue extraction, it does more than threaten privacy. It corrupts the purpose of law, burdens the innocent, weakens due process, damages public trust, and teaches officials to measure justice in dollars collected. Government authority is supposed to serve the people—not monetize them.

Technology may assist human judgment. It must not replace it.

When government turns surveillance into revenue extraction, it does more than threaten privacy. It corrupts the purpose of law, burdens the innocent, weakens due process, encourages mission creep, and teaches officials to measure justice in dollars collected. That is abhorrent because government authority is supposed to serve the people—not monetize them.

Once surveillance is tied to revenue, the slogan "If You Have Done Nothing Wrong, You Have Nothing to Fear" becomes even more dangerous. The issue is no longer merely whether the government is watching innocent people. It is whether the government is watching them in order to create accusations, impose penalties, and collect money. That reverses the proper relationship between citizens and the state.

"If You Have Done Nothing Wrong, You Have Nothing to Fear"

The familiar slogan that innocent people have nothing to fear from surveillance reverses the proper relationship between citizens and government. The American principle is not that citizens must prove they are harmless before government leaves them alone. The principle is that government must have lawful justification before it intrudes upon a person's liberty.

The presumption of innocence means that a person is treated as innocent unless and until the government proves guilt through lawful procedures. Due process requires more than an accusation. It requires notice, a meaningful opportunity to be heard, an impartial decision-maker, and reliable evidence. A Flock camera does not prove who was driving. It does not establish why a vehicle was present. It does not prove what happened before or after the photograph was taken. It does not establish criminal intent.

A license plate can be misread. A character can be altered. A vehicle can be borrowed, rented, sold, or stolen. A family member may be driving. A car may be near a crime scene without being involved in the crime. A camera's location or timestamp may be inaccurate or incomplete. An image may create an appearance of certainty while leaving the most important questions unanswered. A camera record may be a useful investigative lead. It should not be treated as a conviction.

Evidence Must Still Be Tested

There is a serious difference between using a camera image as one piece of corroborating evidence and treating a database entry as if it were an all-knowing witness. A Flock record cannot explain why a vehicle was present. It cannot describe what a person saw or intended. It cannot be cross-examined. It cannot distinguish between presence and participation.

The Sixth Amendment protects the accused's right to confront the witnesses against him and to receive a public trial before an impartial jury. Digital records may be admitted under certain evidentiary rules, but admissibility is not the same as reliability, completeness, or proof beyond a reasonable doubt.

Even Flock's own materials emphasize that its systems are intended to generate investigative leads and that alerts should be verified by a human being before action is taken. That distinction matters. If human verification is necessary before officials act, then a camera alert should never be treated as conclusive proof by itself.

The proper rule should be simple: A Flock camera may generate a lead, but it should not, standing alone, establish identity, criminal conduct, probable cause, or guilt. That concern becomes especially important when a citizen is stopped, cited, arrested, or prosecuted based primarily on a camera image or an officer's interpretation of that image.

The Mark French Case: When Government Evidence Goes Unchallenged

The danger of treating surveillance as proof does not end with the camera or database. It continues when the government uses a technological lead—or an officer's interpretation of that lead—as the basis for accusing a citizen.

That concern is illustrated by Mark French's challenge to a misdemeanor traffic case in Sanders County, Montana. According to the

(continued on page 16A)

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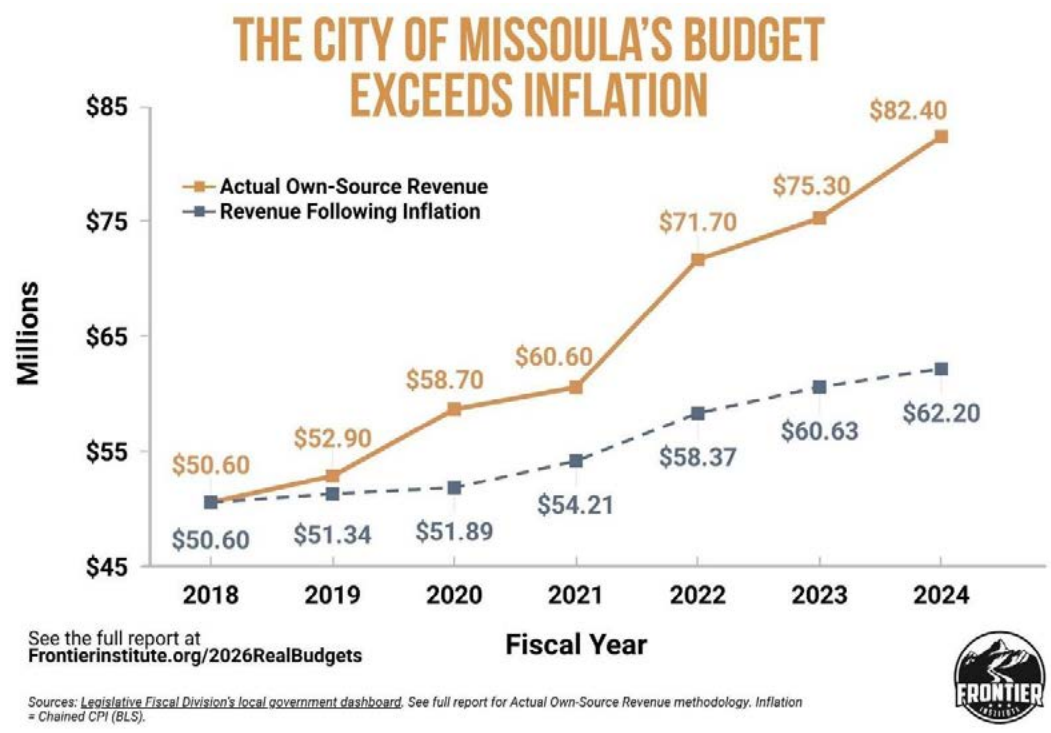
The graph says it all… **~$63M/39.9%** over the inflation-paced growth (2018-2024) …and *now* they're calling for a **3.8% increase** in **Missoula**



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FLOCK FLACK (from page 15A)

filings, French disputed several procedural matters, including the transfer of the Justice Court record, the nature of the District Court proceeding, judicial substitution, trial scheduling, filing fees, and the evidence against him.

French argued that the District Court proceeding should have been a *trial de novo*—a new trial rather than a review of the earlier proceeding—and that he was entitled to a jury trial and the opportunity to substitute the judge. According to the filings, both requests were denied.

The State's response relied in part on Montana Code Annotated § 26-1-301, which allows a single witness's testimony to establish a fact if the fact-finder considers that witness credible. But legal admissibility is not the same as reliability, completeness, or conclusive proof. A single witness may be legally sufficient, yet the testimony must still be carefully examined and weighed by an impartial fact-finder.

The government retains the burden of proof. A citizen should not be treated as guilty simply because an officer's account is presumed more trustworthy—or because the government possesses a camera image, database entry, or computer-generated alert.

Those concerns become even more significant when technology is involved. A camera may record a vehicle without identifying the driver. A database may identify a license plate without establishing intent or proving that a violation occurred. Ultimately, the accusation may still depend on an officer's interpretation of incomplete information.

The issue is not whether officers are always dishonest. Most may sincerely believe what they report. The issue is whether one government witness—or one unverified technological record—should be allowed to outweigh a citizen's liberty without meaningful scrutiny. Due process requires more than an accusation. It requires a fair opportunity to challenge the evidence, question the technology, examine witnesses, and require the government to prove its case.

That is why Mark French's case is relevant to the broader debate over Flock cameras and automated surveillance. Whether an accusation begins with a plate-reader image, a database search, a computer-generated alert, or an officer's observation, an investigative lead must not be treated as proof of guilt. Before the government restricts a citizen's liberty, the evidence must be independently examined and evaluated through a fair and impartial process.

Biblical Justice Rejects One-Sided Accusations

The principle of careful examination is not merely political or technological. It is also consistent with biblical justice. Deuteronomy 19:15 teaches that a matter should be established by the testimony of two or more witnesses. Jesus repeated that principle in Matthew 18:16: "By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established."

These passages do not necessarily mean that every modern legal case must mechanically require two human witnesses. However, they express a profound principle: Serious accusations should not rest casually on one untested assertion.

Biblical justice emphasizes truthful testimony, impartial judgment, examination of evidence, and protection against false accusation. It does not endorse a system in which the government collects information on everyone and then asks the accused to explain why that information should not be used against him.

A camera image is not a witness in either the biblical or ordinary human sense. It cannot be questioned about motive. It cannot explain context. It cannot be challenged about what it failed to record. It cannot distinguish between being present and being responsible. The more serious the consequence, the more important careful review and corroboration become.

Public Consent Cannot Come After Installation

Another serious concern is the lack of meaningful public participation. In some communities, residents learn about Flock cameras only after contracts are signed, equipment is installed, or the system is already operating. Public notices may be buried in meeting agendas, while officials present the

"They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety." - Benjamin Franklin

cameras as a simple safety measure rather than a permanent surveillance network. That is not meaningful consent.

Before cameras are installed, the public should know:

- Who approved the system and whether a public hearing or vote was held;
- How much it costs and who owns the data;
- How long records are retained and which agencies may access them;
- Whether outside, state, or federal agencies can search the system;
- Whether warrants or subpoenas are required;
- Whether searches are limited to serious crimes or may be used for traffic enforcement;
- Who audits searches and whether those audits are made public;
- What penalties apply to officials who misuse the system;
- Whether the system will generate revenue and where the money will go; and
- How citizens can challenge, modify, or terminate the program.

These questions are especially important because government agencies are often reluctant to release even ordinary public records. If officials resist transparency when citizens request routine documents, how much more difficult will it be to determine what they are doing with a vast surveillance database?

Will the public know what information is being collected, who is searching it, what agencies are receiving it, or how often searches are conducted? Will citizens know when data is shared, preserved, or used for a purpose never disclosed when the cameras were installed?

Without mandatory reporting, independent audits, and meaningful public-records access, the people may never know the full extent of government surveillance. A system can operate in the name of public safety while its actual uses remain hidden from public view.

The public should not be expected to rely on promises that officials will use surveillance responsibly. Trust is valuable, but it is not a substitute for transparency, public consent, and enforceable limits.

China Should Be a Warning, Not a Blueprint

China is often cited as an example of how cameras, facial recognition, data analytics, and centralized government control can be combined to monitor citizens. The point is not that every American license-plate-reader system is identical to China's surveillance state. The point is that surveillance infrastructure tends to expand.

A system introduced to locate stolen vehicles can later be used to identify vehicles traveling to certain places. A database created for serious crimes can later be searched for minor offenses. A tool described as "not facial recognition" can still become part of a broader system connecting plate data, mobile-phone records, financial information, social media, facial images, and government databases. The danger is not only what officials say the system does today. The danger is what the system makes possible tomorrow.

American institutions are not immune from corruption, political pressure, mission creep, retaliation, favoritism, or abuse. Government officials are human beings. They may be honest or dishonest, careful or careless, transparent or secretive, fair or vindictive. That is precisely why constitutional restraints exist.

A Better Path Forward

Public safety matters. Victims deserve justice. Law enforcement needs effective tools. But public safety is not a blank check. Surveillance systems should be authorized by law, necessary for a specific public purpose, narrowly limited, transparent to the public, subject to judicial oversight, independently audited, and protected against misuse.

Municipalities should be prohibited from designing surveillance programs around revenue projections. No agency should receive financial incentives based on the number of citations, fines, or penalties generated by automated enforcement. Any fines or penalties should be incidental to a legitimate public-safety purpose—not the reason the system exists. Independent audits should examine whether enforcement patterns are driven by safety concerns or financial targets.

Policies should prohibit political monitoring, personal searches, harassment, and the use of historical travel data without appropriate legal process. Searches should require a documented case number, a specific investigative purpose, supervisory approval, and meaningful public accountability.

Improper searches should carry real consequences, including termination and criminal penalties when appropriate. No person should be fined, charged, or subjected to additional penalties based solely on an automated camera record that fails to establish identity, responsibility, intent, or an actual violation.

Most importantly, citizens should have a genuine opportunity to object before a surveillance system is deployed—not after the cameras are already operating. At the same time, communities must confront the moral crisis that technology cannot solve. Restoring order requires renewed attention to personal responsibility, the authority of God, the Ten Commandments, strong families, honest institutions, and the formation of moral character.

Surveillance can manage symptoms. It cannot create righteousness.

A society that fears God and respects His commandments will need fewer cameras and less coercive enforcement. A society that rejects moral accountability will continue demanding more technology, more databases, more fines, and more government control—yet still lack genuine peace and justice.

Liberty Is Lost One "Reasonable" Exception at a Time

Freedom is rarely lost all at once. One camera is installed to address theft. Another is added near a school. A neighboring county joins the network. A state agency gains access. A federal agency requests records. A search that once required a warrant becomes "just an inquiry." A system introduced for public safety begins generating revenue for local government. Each step may be defended as reasonable. The final system may be anything but free.

The question is not whether law-abiding people should fear being seen in public. The question is whether citizens should be cataloged, stored, searched, analyzed, and financially penalized by government without individualized suspicion and reliable proof.

The answer should be no. The Bill of Rights does not exist only to protect perfect citizens. It protects ordinary people, including those accused by the government, those who disagree with officials, those who attend unpopular churches, those who protest, those who make mistakes, and those who cannot afford powerful lawyers.

Mark French's case provides a useful reminder that due process is not an abstract phrase. It is the barrier between a citizen and the unchecked power of the state. Whether the evidence is a camera record, a database entry, or a lone officer's testimony, the government must still prove its case through a fair and impartial process.

Security is valuable. Liberty is not a disposable accessory.

A free people should demand more than promises. They should demand warrants, transparency, corroboration, due process, public consent, and enforceable limits. They should also reject the transformation of public safety into a revenue-collection scheme. Government authority is supposed to serve the people, not monetize them. Once government can track everyone, accuse anyone, and financially benefit from enforcement, innocence itself may no longer be enough to keep a person out of the system.

MacQue Bohleen Under Investigation

by State of Montana for Alleged Election Law Violations-Her Time as Clerk and Recorder is Up-Vote for Integrity and Transparency – Vote Cheryl Denton for Clerk and Recorder

By Staff Writer

Trust in local government isn't given—it's earned through transparency, statutory compliance, and absolute integrity. When public officials abuse their authority, conceal records, and obstruct the very citizens they are elected to serve, they forfeit the privilege of holding office.

As Carbon County voters prepare to cast their ballots this November, they face a stark reality: current Clerk and Recorder Macque Bohleen and her Election Administrator, Crystal Roascio, are the targets of a formal criminal investigation before the Montana Commissioner of Political Practices (COPP) for alleged violations of state criminal election law. https://politicalpractices.mt.gov/home/Docket-of-Formal-Complaints/Bennett-v-Roascio.pdf

The 2022 Election Night Shredding and Contradictory Statements

The cloud over the Clerk and Recorder's office stems from election night on November 8, 2022. Security camera footage from the Annex Building captured Election Administrator Crystal Roascio feeding approximately 21 batches of paper through an office shredder at roughly 8:45 p.m.—just minutes after polls closed. The paper weight, pre-folds, and visible timing marks strongly indicate these were official absentee ballot materials.

When asked directly on camera during a January 4, 2023 public meeting whether the county retains all election records, including UOCAVA (overseas and military) ballots, both Clerk Bohleen and Ms. Roascio affirmed unequivocally that they keep everything. Yet, when the shredding video became public, the county reversed course, issuing a press release claiming the shredding was merely "routine disposal" of printed UOCAVA materials.

Under federal law (52 U.S.C. § 20701) and Montana state statutes, election officials are mandated to retain all election records for a minimum of 22 months. You cannot claim on video to retain all records and then retroactively excuse election-night shredding as routine.

The Absentee Ballot Chain of Custody

There is another critical issue the public needs to understand. Montana mails absentee ballots to voters before Election Day, meaning county election offices begin receiving voted absentee ballots during the period leading up to Election Day.

Under MCA § 13-13-241, This process takes place as absentee ballots are being received and processed the full 28 days before Election Day. The election administrator and her staff are responsible for the initial handling and verification of these returned ballots. The election staff verify signature envelope, then open the signature envelop to remove the secrecy envelope containing the actual ballot. Montana election materials expressly state that the signature envelopes and secrecy envelopes are kept separate. The election judges and election-day observers are not present during that initial 28 days prior to Election to independently verify that the signatures matched and the secrecy envelopes eventually handed over to the judges are the same secrecy envelopes received inside the corresponding signature envelopes and approximately 80% of our county votes with mail-in ballots.

This means the chain of custody cannot be independently verified by the election judges or observers from the original voter's signature envelope to the secrecy envelope ultimately delivered for counting. By the time the judges receive the secrecy envelopes or ballots contained in those mailed in envelopes, the identifying signature envelope has already been separated from the ballot envelope. The judges and observers therefore have no independent way to establish that a particular secrecy envelope delivered to them is the same secrecy envelope that was originally received inside a particular voter's returned signature envelope.

In practical terms, Montana law places the public's trust in the election administrator and election staff to maintain the security and integrity of those separated ballots while they are in the election office. The critical question

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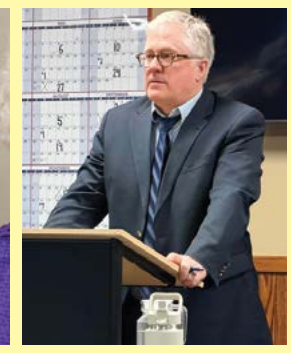
CRIMINAL PROBE HIGHLIGHTS ALLEGED MISCONDUCT AND SECRECY AMONG CARBON COUNTY OFFICIALS

Macque Bohleen


Alex Nixon

Sheriff McQuillan

Sheriff Miller

Power Corrupted

How Carbon County Attorney Alex Nixon Uses and Abuses His Office to Shield the Good Old Boy Club and Silence Critics

OPINION & EDITORIAL

By Lisa Bennett

When a citizen sits in the dock of a courtroom, the message delivered by the State of Montana is absolute, solemn, and unyielding. You are told that the law is a sacred shield, that public safety is paramount, and that rules apply to everyone equally. We are lectured on personal responsibility by prosecutors who wear the mantle of the public trust like a badge of moral superiority.

But what happens when the man holding the charging pen—Carbon County Attorney Alex Nixon, who decides entirely in his own discretion whose life gets upended by a criminal charge—decides that those rules are optional for himself?

Let's be clear about how the power is structured: as County Attorney, Nixon doesn't hold the gavel; a judge does. But the County Attorney holds something far more dangerous in an unchecked system: absolute prosecutorial discretion. He decides which crimes are brought to light and which are quietly buried. That unilateral power means he can simply look the other way for friends and members of the good old boy club, while throwing the full penalty of the law at those that dare challenge the good old boy club. It gives him the unchecked ability to target and prosecute

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When Lawmen Become Outlaws

How Commissioner Scott Miller, Sheriff Josh McQuillan, and the Good Old Boy Machine Built a County in Chaos

OPINION & EDITORIAL

By Lisa Bennett

History teaches us what happens when local officials decide that the law applies to everyone except themselves. In 1946, the citizens of McMinn County, Tennessee, watched in horror as a corrupt political machine rigged elections, used armed deputies to intimidate voters, and stole ballot boxes—pushing returning World War II veterans to take a stand against tyranny on their own soil in the historic Battle of Athens.

We don't need to look back eighty years or across state lines to see the chilling echoes of machine rule. Right here in Carbon County, a cozy network of political insiders operates under the exact same arrogant assumption: that they are above the law, above scrutiny, and immune to accountability.

When you combine a county attorney who actively lies and covers up for his cronies, a sheriff who feigns ignorance to protect insiders while weaponizing his badge against everyday citizens, and commissioners who treat ballot boxes like personal property, what you get is a county in chaos and corruption.

Complicit in the Dark: Scott Miller and the Ballot Handling Scandal

Let's start with Carbon County Commissioner Scott Miller. Back in November 2022, while ballot shredding was taking place, Commissioner Miller was right there on the scene alongside fellow Commissioner Bill Bullock.

Let's be entirely clear about the legal reality: neither Miller nor Bullock were election judges or workers. Furthermore, election day is a legally established state holiday. Yet, both commissioners were actively handling ballots—an action entirely outside their legal authority and contrary to the law. Participating in or aiding and abetting the destruction of election materials is no minor technicality; it strikes at the very heart of a free society.

By rolling up their sleeves and getting involved in the handling of ballots they had no business touching, Miller displayed a staggering lack of judgment and a blatant willingness to break the law when it suits the political machine. Is this really who we want to entrust with the governance of our county?

Miller's callous disregard for the people of Carbon County was just as glaring when disaster struck. During the devastating floods of 2022, when residential water systems were completely knocked out, displaced community members had only one place to shower and clean up: the school locker rooms. But when football practice was starting up, Commissioner Miller didn't care to work on a collaborative solution to accommodate both groups. Instead, he heartlessly kicked flood-stricken residents out on the street. Is this really who we want to entrust with the governance of our county?

The Sheriff Who Protected the Cronies: Josh McQuillan's Selective Badge

If Commissioners Miller and Bullock provided the complicity, Carbon County Sheriff Josh McQuillan provided the ultimate administrative shield.

When credible red flags were raised regarding election irregularities, Sheriff McQuillan didn't investigate; he looked the other way and actively told outside investigators to steer clear—offering a lazy, dismissive "nothing to see here, folks." When a state senator and an election expert explicitly recommended that McQuillan sequester the hard drives off the tabulator machines to preserve them as vital evidence—suggesting the clerk's office simply purchase new hard drives—he flatly refused.

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The Good Old Boy Network

How State and Local Politics Can Distort Truth, Justice, and How Media Coverage Can Be Complicit in the Cover-up

The public is left asking who investigates the people responsible for investigating everyone else.

By Lisa Bennett

Eighty years ago, on August 1 and 2, 1946, citizens in McMinn County, Tennessee, took up arms against their own local government. The confrontation became known as the Battle of Athens, or the McMinn County War. It began with years of resentment over political control, alleged police brutality, voter intimidation, favoritism, and the belief that a local political machine had taken control of law enforcement and elections.

The story remains one of the clearest warnings in American history about what can happen when citizens believe their government has become a closed political club—one in which the sheriff, courthouse officials, political leaders, and election authorities protect one another instead of protecting the people. The Battle of Athens was not caused by one disagreement on one election night. It was the culmination of years of distrust. It was the consequence of citizens believing that the people responsible for enforcing the law were using the law to preserve political power.

The political machine in McMinn County

The central figure in the McMinn County political machine was Paul Cantrell, a former sheriff and Tennessee state senator. Cantrell was associated with the political organization of Edward "Boss" Crump, the powerful Memphis political leader whose influence extended across Tennessee. Cantrell's political operation was supported locally by Sheriff Pat Mansfield, who had served as Cantrell's chief deputy and political ally. In the 1946 election, the two men were effectively rearranging political positions: Cantrell was running for sheriff again, while Mansfield was running for the state Senate.

George Woods, a state representative and secretary of the McMinn County Election Commission, was also associated with the political organization. The machine's strength came not simply from one elected office but from its control over several parts of county government—law enforcement, elections, the courthouse, and the political relationships connecting those institutions. According to historical accounts, Cantrell's organization had developed a reputation for political favoritism and coercive law enforcement. Residents and political opponents accused deputies of using arrests, fines, beatings, and intimidation to punish people who challenged the machine.

The system was especially powerful because local government was not viewed as a collection of independent offices. To many citizens, the sheriff's department, the courthouse, the election commission, and the political organization appeared to function as parts of the same structure. Many people claim we are seeing the same thing today in counties across Montana and America.

> *"That is the true face of a political machine: a system so corrupted that it weaponizes the courts and state power against the very citizens it was built to protect."*
> **— Renee Pirtz, Prairie County MT Land Board Member (Note: Statement reflects personal views, not an official position of the Land Board)**

The machine does not have to control every citizen. It only has to control enough of the offices that determine who gets arrested, who gets prosecuted, who receives government favors, who administers elections, and who has the authority to certify the result. When those offices are controlled by the same political group, citizens may find that there is no neutral institution left to hear their complaints.

Why the returning veterans challenged the system

The men who challenged the McMinn County machine had just returned from World War II and when they came home, they encountered a county government that they believed operated through intimidation and political favoritism.

The headquarters for the G.I. Nonpartisan League in Athens Tenn Courtesy of McMinn County Historical Society and Archives

The veterans organized the GI Non-Partisan League who supported candidates who opposed the Cantrell-Mansfield machine. Their message was straightforward: local government should be accountable to voters, and elections should not be controlled by the sheriff's political organization.

The veterans' challenge was significant because it threatened more than a single office. It threatened the machine's ability to maintain control over the sheriff's department, the courts, county administration, and the election system. The veterans believed that if the machine remained in control, the ordinary methods of political change would not work. If the sheriff's department could intimidate voters, if political allies controlled the election commission, and if ballot boxes could be taken away from public view, then an election could become a performance rather than a method of choosing government.

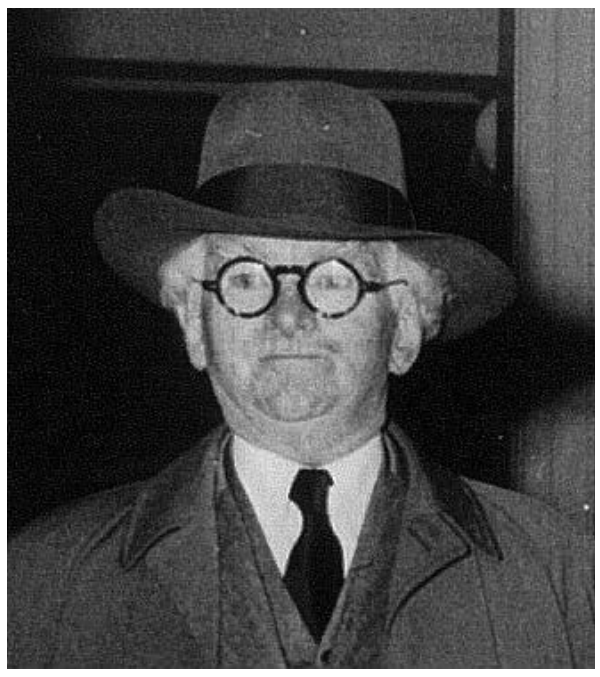
The allegations of law-enforcement intimidation

Accounts of the period describe a county in which political opponents feared the sheriff's deputies. The Tennessee Encyclopedia reports that the dispute involved allegations of police brutality, political corruption, and the use of law enforcement to protect the local political organization. There were also allegations that deputies interfered with voters and poll watchers.

The importance of these allegations is not limited to the individual incidents. They demonstrate why citizens become suspicious when law enforcement is deeply tied to local political power. If the sheriff's deputies are seen as political enforcers, then even ordinary police actions can be interpreted as political retaliation. An arrest may be viewed not as neutral law enforcement but as punishment for opposing the machine. A fine may be seen not as a court decision but as a political weapon. A deputy's presence at a polling place may be understood not as election security but as intimidation. That is how public trust disappears.

The 1946 election became a test of whether the machine could be removed

Historical accounts state that hundreds of deputies were brought into McMinn County to protect the political organization and monitor the election. Some accounts describe deputies being paid to work during the election and being stationed around voting locations. Their presence contributed to the veterans' belief that the election was being conducted under intimidation.



Edward Hull Crump Jr. in 1945

The election was not merely a contest between candidates. It was a contest over whether the sheriff's office and courthouse machine would continue to control the county. The returning veterans organized poll watchers and attempted to monitor the process. They wanted the ballot boxes opened and verified before voting began. They wanted to ensure that ballots were not added, removed, or altered outside public observation.

The ballot-box confrontation

As the polls closed on August 1, the GI-backed candidates were reportedly leading in the early count. That was when the crisis intensified. According to the Tennessee Encyclopedia, Sheriff Pat Mansfield's deputies took key ballot boxes away from the polling locations and carried them to the county jail. The veterans and other citizens objected because the ballots were no longer being counted in public. The issue was who had control of them and what would happen to the ballots once they were inside the jail. The sheriff's deputies were not neutral election workers in the eyes of the veterans. They were employees of the sheriff and supporters of the political machine whose candidates were losing.

The election commission included officials aligned with that machine. George Woods, who was associated with Cantrell and Mansfield, served as secretary of the election commission. The veterans therefore believed that placing the ballots inside the jail gave the machine control over the vote-counting process. The act of taking the ballot boxes, however, was enough to convince the veterans that the ordinary election process had failed. What began as a dispute involving veterans and election officials turned into a mass confrontation involving several hundred people. The veterans' demand was that the ballot boxes be returned and that the votes be counted openly. The deputies refused. That refusal was the moment at which the dispute became a siege.

The standoff lasted for hours. The veterans attempted to force the deputies to surrender the ballot boxes. The deputies refused to come out. The longer the siege continued, the greater the danger became that outside reinforcements would arrive and restore the machine's control. The Tennessee Encyclopedia states that the battle ended only after the front of the jail was dynamited and the deputies surrendered.

The veterans and their supporters took possession of the ballot boxes and proceeded with the count. The votes were counted, and the GI-backed candidates won. The result was a political defeat for the Cantrell-Mansfield organization. The machine that had controlled McMinn County for years was removed from power.

What the Battle of Athens actually demonstrates

The Battle of Athens is sometimes simplified into a story about citizens using guns to stop election fraud. That description captures part of the public memory but leaves out the deeper political context. The episode demonstrates at least four important things.

First, it shows how a local political machine can combine law enforcement, elections, and political power in a way that makes citizens believe there is no neutral institution left to protect them.

Second, it shows how the appearance of a conflict of interest can be as destructive as a proven conflict. When sheriff's deputies loyal to a political machine take possession of disputed ballots, citizens may reasonably suspect that the election is being manipulated—even before anyone proves exactly what happened to the ballots.

Third, it shows that election integrity depends on public confidence. A ballot-counting process that is technically lawful but widely viewed as controlled by political insiders can still produce a crisis of legitimacy.

Fourth, it shows that people are more likely to resort to extraordinary measures when ordinary remedies appear unavailable.

(continued on page 3B)

LAWMEN & OUTLAWS (from page 1B)

Instead, Sheriff McQuillan feigns ignorance of election law, abdicating his fundamental responsibility to oversee that the clerk's staff is operating legally. He defers entirely to the Clerk and Recorder's office to self-regulate and enforce itself, providing zero law enforcement oversight against illegal activities carried out within that office. Let's be entirely honest about how that badge operates: Sheriff McQuillan is apparently only on duty to enforce the law against ordinary citizen election infractions, while looking completely the other way for anyone part of the good old boy network.

A County Captured: Tying It All Together

When a sheriff refuses to enforce election law against insiders, actively interferes with independent investigations, and works hand-in-glove with a county attorney who doesn't just look the other way, but actively lies and covers up for his cronies, the system collapses.

As we've laid bare regarding County Attorney Alex Nixon, this good old boy network protects its own. Nixon uses his absolute prosecutorial discretion to shield insiders while hammering anyone who dares challenge the status quo. He hides behind manufactured secrecy, blocks public records through state-level bureaucratic walls, and leans on deceptive narratives and lies of omission to cover for administrative misconduct.

When you tie Nixon's active cover-ups and legal gymnastics together with Sheriff McQuillan's selective enforcement and Commissioner Miller's unauthorized ballot handling, the picture is unmistakable. It is a carbon-copy local machine reminiscent of the corrupt setups that sparked uprisings like the Battle of Athens. They think the public won't notice, that we will stay quiet while they protect their inner circle and trample our rights.

It is time to retire Nixon, Miller, McQuillan, and crooked Clerk and Recorder Macque Bohleen—who was in charge of the election administration that shredded ballots and is under current criminal investigation—don't vote them back into office. We need public servants with morals, not loopholes. Carbon County deserves a justice system built on integrity, equality under the law, and honest leadership—not a playground for a corrupt good old boy network.

GOOD OLD BOY NETWORK (from page 2B)

The proper lesson is not that citizens should use violence against public officials. The proper lesson is that public institutions must be independent enough, transparent enough, and accountable enough that citizens never conclude that violence is the only way to obtain justice.

The connection to modern government

A political machine can still appear when a sheriff protects a commissioner, a commissioner protects a county attorney, a county attorney protects a sheriff, and the clerk and recorder is pressured to protect the election system that sustains the political organization. The structure may be informal. The people involved may deny any agreement. There may be no written plan. Yet mutual dependence can create the same result.

A sheriff may need county commissioners for funding and staffing. Commissioners may need the sheriff for political support and public-safety messaging. A county attorney may depend on the sheriff's office for cases, evidence, and witnesses. The clerk and recorder may depend on the commission for resources. State officials may decide whether to provide outside investigative assistance. When the same officials are connected by budgets, endorsements, campaigns, investigations, contracts, and future political ambitions, independence becomes difficult to demonstrate. That is why citizens should ask who is investigating a complaint, whether that investigator has a conflict, whether the accused official has political influence over the investigator, and whether an outside authority was considered.

Political ambition and mutual endorsements

The pressure to protect political relationships is intensified by the fact that many officials must run for office again or hope to advance to higher positions. Sheriffs seek reelection and may need endorsements from sheriffs' associations, law-enforcement organizations, county commissioners, political parties, donors, and influential public figures.

County attorneys and prosecutors may seek reelection, judicial seats, legislative positions, statewide office, or appointments. They may depend on endorsements from county attorneys' associations, prosecutors' organizations, judges, sheriffs, political parties, and elected officials.

County commissioners may pursue state legislative positions or other offices. Clerks and recorders may seek reelection or higher administrative roles. These endorsements are not automatically improper. Professional organizations have a legitimate interest in supporting candidates they believe are qualified. But the system becomes dangerous when endorsements create a culture in which officials avoid investigating one another because they do not want to lose political support. The official who makes an enemy today may need that person's endorsement tomorrow.

A sheriff may not want to investigate a commissioner who controls the sheriff's budget. A county attorney may hesitate to prosecute an official who could influence a future appointment. A commissioner may avoid criticizing a prosecutor who has political allies throughout the county. A state official may decline to intervene in a local matter because the local officials are members of the same political organization. No explicit agreement is required. Political loyalty can operate through favors, expectations, and fear of retaliation.

Daily Post-Athenian

G. I. CANDIDATES SWEEP TO GLORIOUS VICTORY

WOODS SIGNS ELECTION CERTIFICATES

The GI winners are declared by the Daily Post-Athenian

Plea deals and the unequal burden on citizens

The same culture of convenience can affect criminal prosecutions. Plea agreements are a legitimate tool. Prosecutors have limited resources, and many cases can be resolved without a trial. But plea bargaining becomes troubling when a prosecutor seeks a deal because the office did not fully investigate the case, lacks the time to prepare, wants to avoid public scrutiny, or is protecting a friend or political ally. An ordinary citizen cannot match the resources of the government.

The prosecution may have investigators, police officers, forensic specialists, subpoena power, prosecutors, legal staff, and taxpayer-funded resources. The accused citizen may have to pay for every hour of an attorney's time, every expert, every document review, and every court appearance.

Even an innocent person may accept a plea to avoid financial ruin. A person may plead because the cost of trial exceeds the family's savings. A defendant may plead because a conviction after trial could result in a longer sentence. Someone may accept a deal because they cannot afford to hire an investigator or expert to challenge the government's evidence.

A plea is not necessarily proof that the investigation was thorough. It is a negotiated resolution. When prosecutors ask for a plea before interviewing all witnesses, reviewing all records, or testing contradictory evidence, the legal system may be rewarding administrative convenience instead of finding the truth. The government should not be permitted to treat a citizen's poverty as evidence of guilt.

Arizona: The Hobbs–Mayes controversy

The same questions about political independence have arisen in Arizona. Arizona Attorney General Kris Mayes investigated allegations involving Governor Katie Hobbs and Sunshine Residential Homes, a company operating group homes for children in state care. The controversy followed reports that Sunshine made substantial political contributions connected to Hobbs and the Arizona Democratic Party and later received a significant increase in its state payment rate. The reported increase was approximately 30 percent, and Sunshine and one other provider were reportedly among the only companies to receive rate increases during the relevant period. On August 21, 2026, Mayes announced that her office would not bring criminal charges. A separate review by Maricopa County Attorney Rachel Mitchell and the Arizona Auditor General was continuing, according to the Associated Press. The Arizona controversy demonstrates why "no charges" does not necessarily answer every question. The public deserves to know what was investigated, what evidence was reviewed, what legal standard was applied, and whether an independent prosecutor was considered. When governments refuse to be transparent, the public cannot know whether a quid pro quo is occurring.

Michigan: Flint and the problem of accountability without a trial

Michigan presents another example of the difficulty of holding powerful officials accountable. The Flint water crisis began after officials changed Flint's water supply to the Flint River in 2014 as a cost-saving measure. Lead from aging pipes entered the water system, and residents experienced years of health and safety concerns.

Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel released a report on August 25, 2026, describing the state's criminal investigation. The investigation involved charges against nine people. The Michigan Supreme Court later halted the prosecutions after ruling against the legal procedure used to bring the cases. Nessel's office described the report as a final accountability step. For residents, however, a report is not the same as a trial. The report may describe what investigators believed happened, but the evidence was never fully tested before a jury.

A prosecution may end because evidence is insufficient, because the charging procedure is invalid, because prosecutors made procedural mistakes, or because a court determined that the government lacked authority to proceed in the manner chosen. When a case ends without a verdict, the public may still have legitimate questions about what happened and who should be held responsible.

The media's position in the political network

The media plays a critical role in exposing government misconduct. But reporters also depend on access. A local journalist may need the cooperation of a sheriff's office to obtain information about arrests and investigations. A reporter may depend on the county attorney

Locals gathered outside the McMinn County jail

(continued on page 6B)

MACQUE BOHLEEN (from page 1B)

is: **Who has access to the room where those ballots are stored before they are delivered to the election judges? Who has keys or other means of access, and what independent records document that access?** Without that information, the public cannot independently verify the chain of custody during this critical period. That is why the laws governing election records and ballot handling are so important and why they need to be changed.

Because of these laws and procedures, we put one of our most critical checks and balances on government into the hands of one person who has the ability to intentionally change results while no one is looking. This is why it is imperative that the person entrusted with administering our elections be someone the public can trust—someone who operates with transparency, honesty, and integrity and is accountable to the people-meaning she or he should be elected not appointed. Because an appointed person is only beholden to their boss who hired them, not the people served.

If the public cannot independently follow the ballot from the moment it arrives at the election office through every subsequent stage of processing, then the integrity of the system depends upon the people entrusted with that responsibility and upon the records and safeguards they are required to maintain.

When an election administrator tells the public that election records are retained and protected, while election materials are subsequently discovered being destroyed and explanations concerning those materials change, the public has legitimate reason to demand answers.

The people of Carbon County deserve an election administrator who understands that these ballots and records belong to the public and that safeguarding them is a fundamental responsibility of the office. Macque Bohleen has shown neither the transparency nor the honesty that this responsibility requires.

The Missing Zero-Report Tape: A Straight Cut and Feigned Ignorance

The pattern of missing evidence doesn't stop with the shredding. Within a week of the November 2022 election, Chip Bennett submitted a formal request for copies of the physical tabulator tapes printed by the ES&S DS200 machines. That request revealed a glaring anomaly: the start-up portion of the tape for one of the two tabulators was completely missing.

This was not a jagged tear, paper jam, or natural roll end. The top of the tape bore a perfectly straight cut, as if executed cleanly with a cutting board or blade. Because that opening section was removed, there was no way for observers or the public to verify the machine's "zero report", the mandatory proof that the tabulator started at zero and contained no pre-loaded votes before counting began.

When confronted about the missing section of the continuous roll, Clerk and Recorder Macque Bohleen feigned ignorance. She claimed to have no idea why it was missing and offered no explanation for where it went, stating simply that she couldn't find it. Whether driven by incompetence, malice, or a deliberate attempt to hide fraud, losing the critical legal proof of a zero baseline is a disqualifying failure of duty.

Broken Security Seals and Missing 2020–2021 Security Logs

Security controls under Bohleen's watch have broken down repeatedly. All tabulators utilized by the county were discovered with four broken security seals, one on each side of the two machines. Despite being responsible for election security, Bohleen and her staff had no idea the seals were broken and could offer no explanation as to when or how it happened, showing a complete lack of attention to detail.

Furthermore, Bohleen served as the primary Election Administrator from 2017 through March 2022. When a public records request was submitted in May 2022 requesting the previous 22 months of mandatory security logs, which track every instance a security seal is opened or replaced, the county produced zero logs for the entire period between January 2020 and January 2022.

As the election administrator during those two years, Bohleen was personally responsible for keeping those records. Did she forget to maintain them, or was she intentionally withholding them to hide something nefarious? Either way, gross negligence or intentional concealment of statutory security logs is not the standard of leadership Carbon County needs in a Clerk and Recorder.

Criminal Charges and a Pattern of Hostility

The pending criminal investigation against Bohleen and Roascio centers on potential criminal violations of Montana state election codes, specifically MCA § 13-35-206 (unlawful injury or destruction of election records) and MCA § 13-1-303 (unauthorized disposition of election materials), alongside the total failure to maintain required statutory election security logs.

Compounding these alleged criminal violations is a long-standing pattern of hostility regarding public records. Over the past several years, citizens seeking basic public documents have encountered arbitrary overcharging, unexcused delays, outright denials, and condescending, uncooperative behavior from the Clerk's office. Bohleen has consistently chosen to hide behind bureaucracy, stonewall citizen inquiries, and treat requests for transparency as personal attacks.

This refusal to respect constitutional right-to-know guarantees ultimately forced the filing of a formal Public Records Request lawsuit against Carbon County. That lawsuit remains active today—and notably, it stands as the primary legal barrier preventing the county from destroying critical election records from 2020 through 2024.

The Path Forward: Restore Integrity to Carbon County

The Clerk and Recorder is the custodian of our county's most sacred civic duties: maintaining public records, preserving historical archives, and administering fair, transparent elections. It is a position that demands absolute openness, honesty, and strict adherence to the law.

Macque Bohleen's tenure has been defined by secrecy, missing audit trails, unrecorded security seals, missing statutory logs, contradictory statements under oath, condescension toward taxpayers, and an active criminal investigation into the destruction of election materials. Carbon County taxpayers and voters deserve an administration that welcomes public oversight rather than fighting it in court.

This November, we have the power to restore trust to our local government. It is time for a conscientious, transparent, and honest leader who will respect the public's right to know and safeguard our elections.

Vote for accountability. Vote Denton for Carbon County Clerk and Recorder.

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When the Ones Who Swear to Protect Rights Start Violating Them

How Constitutionally Illiterate Police Are Trampling Free Speech at the Alamo

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Across the nation, the Alamo stands as an enduring symbol of American liberty—a sacred shrine where men drew a line in the sand and gave their lives in defense of freedom. Its story is revered not just by Texans, but by citizens across the entire country who see it as the bedrock of American independence.

Yet, step onto the public sidewalks surrounding that historic fortress today, and a very different picture of freedom unfolds—one where sworn law enforcement officers treat basic constitutional rights as optional recommendations and blindly act as muscle for bureaucratic overreach.

The Alamo's Revolving Door: Leadership Changes, Sameness in Suppression

The trouble at the historic site came into sharp public view when Alamo Trust President and CEO Kate Rogers was forced out following public exposure of her 2023 doctoral dissertation written at the University of Southern California.

Rogers' academic work advocated for what she termed a "broader historical narrative" and "historical reconciliation". In practice, this meant attempting to shift focus away from the battle-centered framing—the "13 Days of Glory" centered on Texas heroes fighting for independence. Instead, Rogers openly pushed to:

- Challenge Public & Legislative Oversight: Rogers explicitly asserted in her dissertation that politicians should not dictate history curriculum—ignoring the foundational democratic principle that elected officials serve as the public's representatives to oversee taxpayer funds, public institutions, and state curricula. Since the vast majority of education and historic preservation is publicly funded, taxpayers elect representatives specifically to guard public resources and ensure taxpayer dollars reflect the public's values, rather than unelected academics.

- Deprioritize the 1836 Battle: Refocus site presentation on its pre-1836 origins as Mission San Antonio de Valero and push progressive "land acknowledgments" on site grounds.

- Center Slavery as the Primary Driver: Incorporate theories—echoing books like *Forget the Alamo*—that Texas defenders fought primarily to maintain human slavery against Mexican abolition.

Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick called out the paper publicly, stating Rogers' ideology was "incompatible with the telling of the history of the Battle of the Alamo" and calling for her removal.

However, replacing top leadership with a new administration has proven to be nothing more than a cosmetic fix. Months after Rogers' exit, the entrenched culture within the Alamo administration continues to stifle fundamental liberties—most notably, the Freedom of Speech.

This reality was on full display when peaceful Christian abortion abolitionists were confronted by state law enforcement while standing on public space near the Alamo. Holding signs displaying Scripture and verses from the Bible, the peaceful demonstrators were confronted by Texas Department of Public Safety officers who claimed the group was violating protocol. Their offense? Standing outside a designated, arbitrary "free speech zone" manufactured by the Alamo Trust.

When the citizens pointed out that traditional public forums like public sidewalks are protected by the First Amendment, officers ignored binding constitutional precedent, handed down trespass warnings, and arrested four demonstrators. Ironically, the arrests occurred mere yards away from a plaza star engraved with a quote celebrating public liberty and free speech.

Order-Followers vs. The Oath of Office: A Dangerous Police Epidemic

This breakdown highlights a systemic, dangerous crisis running rampant through American law enforcement: a total, willful ignorance of the very Constitution officers swear a solemn oath to uphold.

Every police officer in America raises their right hand and promises to support, protect,

A screenshot of Texas DPS officers arresting a street evangelist in San Antonio on Aug. 15, 2026. | Screenshot/YouTube/@Texas 2A Attorney CJ Grisham

and defend the Constitution of the United States. Yet, in practice, a shocking majority of officers receive zero meaningful education on what that document actually protects. Few can define the boundaries of the First Amendment, articulate the rules governing traditional public forums, or understand the hard limits placed on government power.

Instead of operating as critically thinking guardians of constitutional rights, officers have devolved into unthinking order-followers. When told by administrators or departmental policy to clear a sidewalk or silence a voice, officers routinely choose the easy path of blind compliance—enforcing unconstitutional corporate or municipal policies over the supreme law of the land.

When police surrender their critical thinking to follow illegal orders, they cease acting as defenders of justice and turn into armed enforcement agents for bureaucratic overreach. "I'm just doing my job" and "I was just following orders" are hollow excuses that directly betray the badge on their chest and the oath on their lips.

Rooted Bureaucracy and the Power of Unions

Why does swapping out a chief executive fail to alter an institution's behavior? Because decapitating the top of a modern institution does little to change the ideological machinery operating beneath it.

Across public and quasi-public entities nationwide, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) frameworks and anti-constitutional ideologies have quietly permeated every level of middle management and operational staff. Removing a CEO like Kate Rogers leaves intact an entrenched workforce that continues to craft and push restrictive policies onto clueless police forces.

Compounding the problem are powerful public employee unions and bureaucratic civil-service protections. Built to shield workers, these structures often make it nearly impossible to fire low- and mid-level personnel who actively trample on constitutional guarantees or refuse to adhere to statutory mandates. When entrenched staff cannot be held accountable, administrative tyranny becomes standard operating procedure, regardless of who sits in the executive office.

Reclaiming Stolen Institutions

If Americans hope to preserve their republic, replacing a CEO here or holding a press conference there will not suffice. Saving institutions that have been captured by anti-constitutional thought requires a hard-hitting, comprehensive overhaul:

1. Mandatory Constitutional Literacy and Liability for Police: Law enforcement training academies must end the culture of passive order-following. Police officers must be thoroughly trained in constitutional law and held personally accountable—losing qualified immunity—when they enforce unlawful policies that violate citizens' rights.

2. Complete Bureaucratic Audits: State legislatures and oversight bodies must systematically exercise their statutory mandate over taxpayer dollars, dismantling DEI frameworks and unconstitutional administrative rules across all public institutions.

3. Union and Civil Service Reform: Lawmakers must reform public-sector employment rules, ensuring that entrenched staff who repeatedly violate citizens' constitutional protections can be promptly terminated without bureaucratic shield.

The Alamo was once saved by individuals willing to stand firm against tyranny. If institutions created to honor that legacy now rely on constitutionally illiterate police to strip away the basic freedoms of the people, the spirit of the Alamo is lost—not to foreign armies, but to our own law enforcement's blind obedience.

GOOD OLD BOY NETWORK (from page 3B)

for case updates. A newspaper may need county officials to provide records, interviews, background information, and access to public meetings. That dependence can create pressure.

A reporter who publishes an unfavorable story may be excluded from briefings, ignored by officials, or denied informal access. A sheriff may stop returning calls. A governor's office may provide exclusive information to a more favorable outlet. A county attorney may quietly label a reporter as hostile or unreliable. The reporter is then forced to walk a tightrope. Tell the full story and risk losing access—or report the government official in a positive light to remain in the loop. Sometimes this pressure is direct. More often it is subtle. The official does not have to threaten the reporter. The official only has to stop cooperating.

That can influence coverage. An investigation may be described as a partisan dispute instead of a conflict-of-interest case. A prosecution that was never fully investigated may be described as a routine plea agreement. A public-records dispute may be presented as an administrative disagreement. An official's denial may receive prominent coverage while the documents contradicting that denial are left out. A story can be technically accurate while still misleading the public.

The bullet holes caused by Bill White's rifle are still visible today

Media lies of omission

A "lie of omission" occurs when important information is left out in a way that creates a false impression and many politicians and county attorneys are experts in this realm. A story may report that an attorney general declined to prosecute a governor without explaining that the investigation was conducted by an office politically connected to the governor or failing to clarify that the investigation was never fully completed. A report may say that a defendant accepted a plea without explaining that the person was innocent but could not afford a trial.

A newspaper may quote a sheriff's press release without telling readers that the sheriff's office refused to release supporting records. A story

Historical Society image the day after the Battle of Athens

may announce that an election complaint was dismissed without explaining whether anyone independently examined the ballots, poll books, chain-of-custody records, or tabulator logs.

No journalist can include every fact in every story. Deadlines and limited staffing are genuine problems. But repeated omissions involving powerful officials can become a form of institutional protection. The public receives the official narrative while the facts that would allow citizens to evaluate that narrative remain hidden.

A free press cannot become an unofficial public-relations department for the government and in many instances it has. Access may help a reporter discover the truth, but access must never determine which truth the public is allowed to hear.

The danger of institutional self-investigation

The most serious accountability problem occurs when public officials investigate their own friends, political allies, supervisors, campaign supporters, or professional associates. A sheriff may be asked to investigate a commissioner who controls the sheriff's budget. A county attorney may be asked to review allegations involving the county commission that the attorney advises.

A prosecutor may be asked to investigate a law-enforcement agency whose officers provide the evidence used in the prosecutor's cases. An election official may be asked to investigate political conduct involving officials who control the election office's funding. A state attorney general may investigate a governor from the same political party. These relationships do not automatically prove bias. But they create an appearance of conflict that should be addressed through recusal and independent review. The public should not have to accept an official's claim of impartiality without being allowed to examine the process.

Restoring public trust

The remedy is not political violence, and it is not the assumption that every official is corrupt. The remedy is independent accountability. Complaints involving elected officials should be eligible for review by outside investigators and investigations records shouldn't automatically be classified as "confidential." Prosecutors with personal, political, family, financial, or professional conflicts should recuse themselves. Special prosecutors should be used when the county attorney or attorney general cannot reasonably act independently. Investigations should produce written explanations identifying the evidence reviewed, the witnesses interviewed, the legal standard applied, and the reasons for the final decision.

Election complaints should be addressed through transparent audits, preserved records, chain-of-custody documentation, and independent review. Public contracts should be competitively bid, conflicts should be disclosed, and invoices should not be divided to avoid oversight. Public officials should preserve emails, text messages, recordings, calendars, and other communications involving public business.

Professional associations should disclose how endorsements are made and whether their endorsements create financial or political obligations. Endorsements should not become shields against investigation. The media should disclose when officials refuse to answer questions, identify when records were withheld, provide opposing viewpoints, and distinguish between allegations, documented facts, official findings, criminal charges, and convictions.

The warning from Athens

The Battle of Athens began because citizens believed local government had become a closed system controlled by insiders. They believed the sheriff's deputies were protecting the political machine. They believed the ballot boxes had been taken to the jail to prevent an honest public count. They believed the election commission could not be trusted to resolve the dispute. They believed the ordinary institutions of government had failed.

The veterans' response was unlawful and dangerous. But the conditions that produced the confrontation were also dangerous. When citizens believe the sheriff protects the commissioner, the commissioner protects the county attorney, the county attorney protects the sheriff, and state officials protect the entire structure, the public begins to question whether government serves anyone except itself.

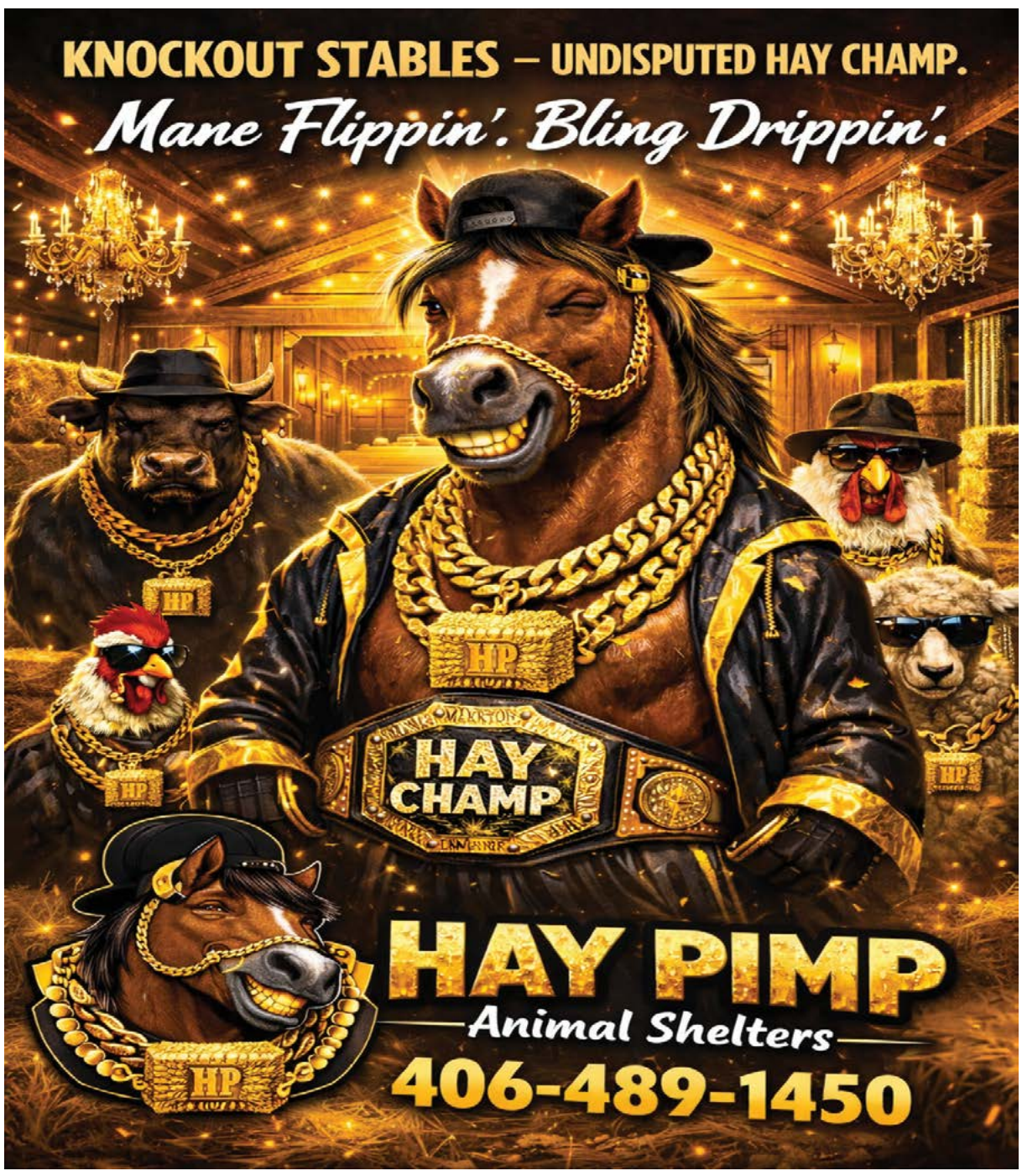
When prosecutors negotiate pleas because they do not have time to investigate, citizens may be convicted without the facts ever being fully tested. When ordinary people cannot afford investigators, experts, attorneys, or years of litigation, justice becomes available mainly to those with money. When reporters fear losing access, the public may receive favorable government narratives instead of the complete truth. When professional associations endorse officials who are expected to investigate one another, the appearance of a political club becomes unavoidable.

The system may insist that every decision was lawful. The public may still believe the system was designed to protect its members, but we should no longer be naïve to think that political insiders aren't manipulating the outcomes behind the scenes, where they control the levers of justice. That is why the lesson of Athens remains relevant in Montana, Arizona, Michigan, and throughout America. The question is not whether every official belongs to a conspiracy. The question is whether the structure of government allows political relationships to override independent judgment.

The people need sheriffs who enforce the law without political favoritism. They need prosecutors who investigate before negotiating. They need county commissioners who welcome scrutiny. They need election officials whose procedures can withstand independent review. They need attorneys general who explain politically sensitive decisions in detail. They need governors who understand that public office is a responsibility, not a shield. And they need journalists who understand that access is a tool for reporting the truth—not a reward for protecting the powerful.

The Battle of Athens occurred 80 years ago. Its warning remains current:

When officials protect officials, prosecutors protect institutions, and media silence protects both, citizens lose faith in government one unanswered question at a time.



POWER CORRUPTED (from page 1B)

any citizen who steps out of line—making examples out of community members he wants to intimidate, silencing critics, or pushing ideological political agendas under the guise of law and order.

Carbon County Attorney Alex Nixon has made a career out of this brand of selective accountability. Yet, looking back at his track record of dodging scrutiny, sheltering insiders, and his own cavalier brushes with the law, it is painfully clear: Carbon County has a top prosecutor who looks the other way for political insiders, and enforces strict punishment for anyone who dares rock the boat.

The Midnight Double Standard and the Cost of Recklessness

Let's talk about the elephant in the room—or rather, the cruiser parked on the side of the highway, and the dangerous reality of driving under the influence.

According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an impaired driver has, on average, driven under the influence approximately 80 times before their first official arrest. When an ordinary citizen who dares to question the status quo gets behind the wheel after a drink, the system moves with swift, merciless precision. Handcuffs click, licenses are suspended, and public shaming follows immediately. But when Carbon County's own chief law enforcement lawyer, Alex Nixon, was pulled over by the Montana Highway Patrol and slapped with a DUI charge, how did the machinery react? Behind closed doors, quiet legal handwringing, and an establishment eager to look the other way and sweep personal failings under the rug.

How many innocent families, teenagers, and community members did Nixon seriously put in jeopardy on the road before that arrest caught up with him—and how many times since? Among local observers, the open secret and persistent rumor is that his March 2023 arrest was hardly an isolated incident, pointing to a long-running pattern of driving under the influence both before and after that night.

When the heat briefly turned up, Nixon offered a token gesture of resignation—knowing full well that his allies on the county commission would refuse to accept it, allowing him to save face while keeping his grip on power. True to form for the good old boy network, the commissioners quickly batted it away, keeping him securely in office. And while ordinary offenders carry the permanent stigma of their convictions, Nixon managed to secure an expunged record—a legal luxury few ordinary citizens ever see.

The hypocrisy runs even deeper when examining his private conduct in the county's open range area, a legally established "driver beware" zone where livestock have the legal right to roam. Consider the civil litigation involving the Harrison Ranch Company, where late at night Nixon struck a cow on the open range. In a stunning display of entitlement, reports indicate he was never given a breathalyzer at the scene, yet had the gall to turn around and sue the ranch, dragging a local family-owned business through a punishing three-year legal battle and saddling them with heavy legal fees. It is the ultimate expression of a system rigged by the good old boy network: wreck your car on someone else's livestock in a designated open range where drivers are legally bound to beware, escape standard chemical testing, and then use the legal system to punish the victim.

Masterclass in Manipulation: Lies of Omission, Secret Files, and Political Cover-Ups

If you want a masterclass in how this good old boy network covers its tracks, look no further than how Nixon handles official inquiries. When responding to state regulators regarding election integrity complaints, Nixon mastered the art of the misleading narrative. In an official May 18, 2026 letter to the Commissioner of Political Practices (COPP), Nixon aggressively pushed to dismiss complaints by leaning heavily on technicalities, claiming that the applicable periods of limitation had run.

Conveniently, Nixon's letter relies on lies of omission: he emphasizes that the misdemeanor statute of limitations has passed, while glossing over the fact that if federal or felony election violations occurred, those carry a 5-year window. He boldly asserts that matters were "thoroughly investigated" and "found to be unsupported". But when public records requests were subsequently filed with the Montana Department of Justice (DOJ) to view the DCI investigative files, the AG's office stonewalled, hiding behind a blanket claim that investigation files are completely confidential and refusing to produce a single record.

If there is nothing to hide, why keep the records locked away? When transparency is blocked, it becomes entirely plausible that these agencies are covering up the fact that a rigorous investigation was never actually completed—or perhaps never happened at all. Nixon leans heavily into this manufactured lack of transparency, counting on the public's inability to verify his claims. Meanwhile, whispers grow louder about how federal inquiries into local conduct—such as the FBI investigation—mysteriously wound down after just a single interview, managed under an establishment where partisan ties and institutional self-preservation run deep. After all, Nixon operates as a Democrat while carefully hiding behind the "nonpartisan" label in local races, seamlessly leaning on friendly state-level networks to shield his office from real accountability.

This systemic deception traces right back to the county's public statements. In a January 2023 press release approved under his watch, the county defended the shredding of UOCAVA ballot materials by claiming it was standard practice to protect voter identity. Yet this "interpretation" flies directly in the face of common sense and election laws, which mandate that all election records must be preserved. Whether it is dodging accountability for destroying documents, hand-waving away serious allegations, or building an administrative shield to protect local cronies, Nixon treats the law not as a standard of justice, but as a flexible tool to protect his inner circle.

Hiding Behind the Shield of Government Immunity

When regular people make a mistake, they face the music. When Alex Nixon makes a mistake—or worse, when his office tramples on the civil liberties of citizens—he doesn't face a jury of his peers. Instead, he retreats behind the impenetrable fortress of government and prosecutorial immunity.

As legal scholars and everyday citizens increasingly ask: *When government breaks the law, can you even sue?* The answer in Nixon's world is a frustrating, rigged "no."

When federal civil rights lawsuits have pointed out that Nixon acted outside the bounds of proper legal procedure—stepping into private property disputes to act as a "curbside courtroom" without probable cause—he didn't stand up like a man and defend his actions on their merits. He hid behind the state, invoking legal shields designed to protect public officials from accountability, effectively rendering himself untouchable. It is the ultimate tool of the institutional bully: wield the heavy sword of the state against everyday citizens who challenge the local power structure, and when you overreach, duck behind government immunity to dodge the consequences while the taxpayers foot the bill.

A History of Strategic Omissions and Evasion

As County Attorney, an elected prosecutor's job is not to win at all costs; it is to seek justice. Yet time and time again, Nixon has demonstrated that his primary loyalty is not to the people of Carbon County, but to power preservation and protecting his cronies.

It's a game of strategic omissions, where uncomfortable truths are buried, oversight is resisted, and anyone who dares question the local power structure is treated as an enemy of the state. From shielding institutional allies to dodging liability when his office steps out of line, Nixon relies on secrecy and legal technicalities to keep the public in the dark.

The Public Deserves Better Than a Protector of Himself

The people of Carbon County are not fools. We smell the stench of protectionism. We see how sensitive investigations involving the good old boy club are met with a blind eye, while the full weight of the law is brought down on anyone who dares challenge them.

Alex Nixon was elected to protect the public, not his own career or his network of friends. He was hired to uphold the law, not treat it as a flexible weapon that looks the other way for insiders while intimidating those who demand transparency.

As County Attorney, a prosecutor who flouts the very laws he is sworn to enforce—and then cowers behind government immunity to avoid accountability—has forfeited his moral authority to prosecute anyone else. A man who relies on secrecy, special treatment for his inner circle, and institutional armor has no business sitting in a public office funded by the very citizens he holds in contempt.

It is time to retire Nixon—don't vote him back into office. We need a County Attorney with morals, not loopholes. Carbon County deserves a justice system built on integrity, equality under the law, and honest leadership—not a private playground for the good old boy network.

Your Actions May Not Deliver Obvious Wins, But Perhaps They Thwart Greater Evil—Have Faith in God's Plan and Continue to Be His Hands and Feet

In every movement for justice, progress, or faith, there exists a profound truth: outcomes often extend far beyond the visible actions of any individual. History offers countless examples where contributions, large or small, played essential roles in shaping the world, even if the contributors themselves did not witness the final victory. A compelling illustration is found in the life of William Wilberforce, the British parliamentarian whose prolonged struggle helped abolish the slave trade in the United Kingdom.

While Wilberforce is often recognized as the face of the abolition movement, the victory was a collective achievement. It involved people like Thomas Clarkson, who gathered crucial evidence; John Newton, who provided spiritual guidance; the Quakers, who organized sacrificially; and countless ordinary Britons who petitioned and altered their buying habits. Each played a part in the broader effort, none fully aware of the eventual impact.

Wilberforce's journey was fraught with challenges, even after legislative success. He and his allies strived to pass laws abolishing the slave trade. However, these victories were not the end. Traders with vested interests found ways to manipulate and circumvent the laws. Some reclassified their ship's cargo, claiming it was not human beings. Others exploited legal loopholes by operating in foreign ports where British laws were ineffectual, allowing the horrific practice to continue. Despite seeing their efforts twisted for personal gain, Wilberforce and his allies remained steadfast. They were fighting not just legal battles, but a moral one, aiming to transform the conscience of a nation. Their perseverance—despite such manipulation—highlighted the enduring power of faith and commitment, even when immediate victories seemed elusive.

A pivotal lesson from Wilberforce's story is redefining success. The worth of one's work isn't solely measured by legislative victories or public acclaim. Instead, faithfulness to one's calling—remaining steadfast in the role God has assigned—is a form of obedience and success. Most may never witness the full fruits of their labor. The abolition of the slave trade emerged from innumerable small acts: a signed petition, a changed purchase, a word of encouragement. These actions collectively reshaped the moral fiber of an entire nation.

In this narrative, God is seen as weaving the efforts of His people into a tapestry far beyond any single thread. Wilberforce's trust that God would use his faithfulness for a greater purpose serves as a reminder that our contributions, however modest, are part of a divine plan, potentially leading to outcomes beyond our understanding.

For members of any cause, take heart: your efforts matter, even if results aren't immediate. Remain steadfast, trust in your faithfulness, and believe that your work is part of God's greater plan. The story of William Wilberforce and the abolition movement testifies to the power of collective, faithful action. Every contribution is woven by God into a narrative of redemption and transformation.

Your efforts are not in vain. You may never fully understand their impact, but in God's plan, nothing is wasted. Stay at your post, persevere through setbacks, and trust that your work is part of something far greater.

A Bucket of Water and a Bar of Gold

By By Jeff Pattison, Republican candidate for Montana Public Service Commission

I have often said that when you truly need it, I would rather have a bucket of water than a bar of gold.

That may sound like a simple observation from a Montana farmer and rancher, but it expresses something deeper about how I believe government should work. We must understand the difference between what is valuable and what is essential.

Water is essential. Reliable electricity is essential. Affordable heat in a Montana winter is essential. Telephone and broadband services that connect rural families, businesses and emergency responders are essential.

The Public Service Commission exists because most utility customers cannot shop around for another provider. That places a serious responsibility on commissioners to ensure monopoly utilities receive a reasonable opportunity to operate successfully—but never a blank check at the expense of captive ratepayers.

My governing philosophy begins with a simple principle: the people who create a cost should pay that cost, and those who receive the benefit should carry their fair share of the risk.

That principle is increasingly important as Montana considers data centers and other enormous industrial loads. Economic development can create opportunity, but Montana families, farmers, ranchers and small businesses should not pay higher utility bills for infrastructure built primarily to benefit somebody else. Nor should ratepayers be left holding the bag if a project closes, relocates or fails.

Large projects may require new generation, transmission lines, substations and other expensive infrastructure. Before existing ratepayers are exposed, Montana should consider appropriate financial guarantees, bonding and decommissioning requirements. If a development creates the demand, its owners—not ordinary ratepayers—should bear the resulting costs and long-term risks.

That is not anti-development. It is responsible development.

We should also demand more from the infrastructure we already have.

Utility efficiency is not glamorous, but energy saved through improved transmission, reduced line loss and updated technology is energy that does not have to be generated and paid for again. Montana should examine advanced conductors, grid modernization and other innovations that can increase capacity, improve reliability and reduce wildfire risk.

At the same time, we must remain open to new generation. Montana needs dependable power when the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining. Coal, natural gas and hydropower remain important, while advanced nuclear, improved storage and emerging technologies may become part of our future. We should evaluate each option honestly—without ideological blinders—and ask whether it is safe, reliable, affordable and suitable for Montana.

A commissioner must also recognize the limits of the office. The Legislature establishes the laws and sideboards under which the PSC operates. The commission then applies those laws to individual cases based upon the evidence. Commissioners should communicate clearly with legislators when laws need clarification, while preserving the independence required in matters that may come before the commission.

Cooperation should extend to Montana's electric and telephone cooperatives. Although electric cooperatives generally fall outside the PSC's rate-setting authority, they serve many of the same Montana families and face many of the same questions about reliability, affordability, transmission and future growth. I would like to establish a regular forum where cooperatives, regulated utilities, consumer advocates, legislators and the public can identify challenges before they become crises.

Transparency must be more than a slogan. Montanans deserve understandable information, meaningful opportunities to participate and commissioners willing to explain their reasoning. Not every decision will please everyone, but people should never feel that decisions affecting their homes and livelihoods were made before their voices were heard.

My faith teaches me that leadership is stewardship. Public office does not belong to the person occupying it; it is a temporary trust given by the people. A commissioner should therefore arrive prepared, listen carefully, ask difficult questions and remember who ultimately pays the bill.

No commissioner should pretend to have every answer. Good decisions require preparation, sound evidence and the humility to listen. But I know the questions I will carry into every decision:

Will this keep service safe and reliable? Is it fair to existing customers? Who receives the benefit? Who carries the risk? And will this decision leave Montana stronger for our children and grandchildren?

Montana can welcome opportunity without surrendering the essentials that sustain us. Gold may attract attention, but when the well runs dry, we remember what is truly valuable.

Sometimes the soundest public policy begins with something as simple as a bucket of water.

Jeff Pattison

Republican candidate for Montana Public Service Commission, District 1

Power to the People