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?

Sheriff McQuillan

Commissioner Miller

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.

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.