



P. 4: WITH NEW BLM CHIEF, WILL PUBLIC LANDS BE UP FOR GRABS?



P. 4: BECKY BEARD: DOES AI HAVE A PLACE IN SCHOOLS?



P. 8: ZINKE CALLS OFF REELECTION BID: HOUSE RACE HEATS UP

THE MONITOR

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SERVING THE FUTURE OF JEFFERSON COUNTY

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2026

Former rep DeVries files to run again for HD 75 seat

By ELIZA DUBOSE
Reporter

Former House District 75 rep. Greg DeVries, who lost the 2020 Republican primary to current state Commerce Secretary Marta Bertoglio, is seeking the legislative seat again as a Libertarian.

The 56-year-old Jefferson City-based painting contractor filed to run on Feb. 20, returning to Jefferson County politics with a bold main objective: to “almost completely eliminate state taxes, while still fully funding programs,” he said in an interview.

That goal reflects a slight shift from his previous stint. Running in 2018 on devout Christian values and limited government, DeVries beat Gregg Trude by 10 points in the primary before besting

Basin lawyer Bryher Herak by a slightly larger margin in the November election.

Contributing a semi-regular column to The Monitor, rep. DeVries emerged as a lightning rod, upsetting some constituents with overtly religious views and inspiring more than 50 letters to the editor. At a Monitor forum, he asserted that many mental health issues stem from spiritual problems, which a Montana City reader said “shows his ignorance.”

In the 2019 legislative session, he introduced bills to end compulsory school attendance and amend the state constitution to define personhood as beginning at conception.

Neither made it far. On public schools, former Montana poet laureate Melissa Kwasny argued that DeVries held “dangerous views”.

Concern about those views inspired Bertoglio, a U.S. Air Force veteran, business owner, and school board chair, to run for HD 75 after reading DeVries’ Monitor columns. She beat him handily in the primary, gaining 70% of the vote – and giving DeVries a useful insight.

“It became clear to me,” he said, “the Republicans in this district don’t want my kind of Republicanism.” As a Libertarian, he advocates liberty, property rights, and small government, but stipulates that



Greg DeVries

people should “always be under the authority of God’s Word in their freedom.”

Bertoglio went on to win the 2020 general election and served as HD 75 rep. until last June, when Gov. Greg Gianforte named her Commerce Secretary. As her replacement, the County Commission selected Whitehall craftsman and former school board trustee Mark Reinschmidt, who has filed to run as a Republican. Patrick Sullivan of Clancy has filed to run as a Democrat.

Spearheading DeVries’ campaign against those two foes is his tax cutting plan, which involves GoFundMe-style crowdsourcing: citizens would visit a state donations website to choose which government functions to help finance.

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On to Billings!



Jefferson High's bench celebrates a Panther run during the District 5B basketball tournament in Amsterdam last weekend. Jefferson's boys and girls both advanced to the Southern Divisional tourney in Billings starting Wednesday. Story, page 9. (John Smith/The Monitor)

Clancy Water leans toward well easement

By PIPER HEATH
Reporter

The Clancy Water & Sewer District board is leaning toward an easement agreement for its new well site while the county attorney reviews protective language for water infrastructure built on private property.

The board faces two options: negotiate a permanent easement with property owner Steve Marks or purchase the property outright. At the Feb. 25 meeting, board members weighed residents’ need for water against concerns about what might happen to its planned wells and treatment facility if the district were to dissolve or the easement face legal challenges.

Envisioning a future scenario, district board member Bob Johnson outlined the group’s key concern. “We’ve got these beautiful wells, we’ve got the treatment facility and the sheds and the fencing and all that other stuff,” he said. “Something happens, that can’t fall back on the property owner because those were made and done with public funds.”

The discussion came as Great West Engineering, the firm hired by the district, prepares to submit plans and specifications for well construction to the Montana Department of Environmental Quality this week, with construction bids potentially going out within the next month.

The firm has been working to finalize an easement that would give the district permanent access to the well site without owning the land. The alternative – purchasing the property – would give the district full ownership but come with significant hurdles.

Collette Anderson, project manager at Great West, emphasized that entering the easement wouldn’t prevent the district from purchasing the property later. But she warned that switching to pursue a purchase now would significantly delay the project and likely cause the district to lose remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, which must be spent by June 30.

“If we don’t move forward with the easement, and you want to pursue the property for purchase, that’s going to take much longer,” said Anderson. “We’ll probably lose the rest of that ARPA money, so we won’t be able to get this up to bid and construct it.”

A purchase would also require subdivision review by DEQ if the district breaks off a parcel from Marks’ larger property, a process Anderson said would take considerable time. Board member Bill Hammer raised the possibility of pursuing

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Plumbing the ranch-city symbiosis

By ELIZA DUBOSE
Reporter

Three generations of Jefferson County ranchers touched on the heart and soul of their community at last week’s Community Heart & Soul Story Spotlight Night in Boulder.

Nearly 40 people gathered Feb. 25 in the St. Catherine Church pastoral center to hear Helen Carey, 86, Brady Minow-Smith, 41, and Maylea Dawson, 17, speak about ranch life, their hopes for the future, and the bond between ranching and the town they call home.

“There’s a really great sort of symbiotic relationship between the ranching

community and the town of Boulder in that both sort of help each other thrive,” Minow-Smith said during the Monitor-moderated event.

Community Heart & Soul, a nonprofit development program, aims to leverage greater engagement and storytelling to guide rural revitalization. The project’s essay contest, which ended March 2, received four submissions. Contest winners, to be announced later this week, will receive gift cards from local businesses ranging from \$25 to \$ 75.

Boulder Heart & Soul has also gathered nearly 180 resident stories, according to Rochelle Hesford, who is leading the effort and viewed last week’s event as a success.

“I had a few people come up to me and offer suggestions for other people to interview, and then also to offer to volunteer,” she said. “That was definitely one of the goals, because we need to keep moving and adding more volunteers to maintain the impact of what we’re doing.”

Over two hours, the three women spoke in detail about their lives and what they most value about their home. Despite the decades separating them, each emphasized Boulder’s unconditional support and the ranching community as essential to the town’s character.

Of the three speakers, only Carey was

Election 2026

‘Impossible’? Bankhead eyes Daines’ seat

By PIPER HEATH
Reporter

Early in her career, Alani Bankhead struggled to see herself as a natural fit for the rooms she kept ending up in.

“When I was younger, I struggled with imposter syndrome a lot,” she said. “I am small, female, brown, so not what you would expect in those high-powered positions. And it took me at least 10 years to figure out that those were my superpower.”

As a hand-picked bodyguard at the Pentagon, she found that her non-threatening appearance put potential threats at ease, reducing confrontations. “Nobody expected me to be the bodyguard,” she said. “So my team actually had the least number of use-of-force incidents.”

Then her boss handed her, the only female agent, the lead on a child exploitation case in Japan.

“I’m like, me? This guy’s not gonna talk to me. Give it to one of the guys.” Her boss refused, so Bankhead went into the interview room and got the confession. “When I realized that I could be a tool to protect kids, I was hooked after that.”

In January, the 43-year-old Helena resident entered the Democratic primary for Montana’s U.S. Senate seat, the fourth candidate to join a field vying to challenge Republican incumbent Sen. Steve Daines in November.

She brings more than two decades of Air Force service, a history of stopping crimes against children and a highly successful colleague, Lulu, her retired electronics detection



Alani Bankhead

Continued on Page 6

OUR MISSION: The Monitor serves the people of Jefferson County, Montana, reflecting their reality, informing their ambitions, and helping them navigate their shared future. It endeavors to provide authoritative, fact-based reporting that surfaces and explains issues at the heart of our community — exploring both urgent challenges and the responses to those challenges. It will hold power to account by demanding transparency, investigating wrongdoing, and revealing how what’s broken could be fixed. The Monitor fairly represents a diverse range of perspective, not beholden to one path or another or to any politicians, political parties, or special interests.

Public Meetings

COUNTY COMMISSION

Mar. 10, 2026 - Clerk & Recorder meeting room
zoom.com/join, Meeting ID 671-828-8589

- 9:30 Claims approval
 - 10:00 Solid Waste Board meeting
 - 10:30 Meetings with various department heads
 - 11:30 Recess for lunch. **Re-convene at 1:30 p.m.**
 - Pledge of Allegiance; Minutes; Reports; Correspondence; Calendar review; Commission reports; Opportunity for public comment
 - Items for Commissioners action or review:**
 - Non-time-specific:**
 - Discuss and decide on supporting truck speed limit increase on I-90 Eastbound, Homestake Pass
 - Resolution 09-2026 Creating Consolidated Land Use Board
- website: <http://jeffersoncounty-mt.gov>

JEFFERSON COUNTY SOLID WASTE BOARD

March 10, 10:30 am

Clerk & Recorder's Conference Room

To join remotely, phone: 1-646-558-8656. Computer: zoom.com/join. Meeting ID 671-828-8589

- Minutes, Manager's Report:** Incidents: No injuries. Updates: Permits, staff, recycling update
- Correspondence, Public Comment**
- Items for Board's action, review or consent**
- Applications for adjustment and/or cancellation**

BASIN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Board of Trustees Meeting

Basin Community Hall - Mar. 9, 6:30 pm

- Minutes; Public comment; Correspondence
- New Business: Board member appointment- Sarina Eckman
- Old Business
- Bills; Fire Department Business
- Chief's Report
- Community Hall: Improvements; Office heater; Hall heat
- Schedule Next Meeting

NORTH JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

Monday, Mar. 9 - 5:30-7 p.m.

Clancy Schoolhouse Meeting Room

- Welcome, Introductions, Public comment, Consent items
- Unfinished Business:**
- Board vacancy appointment: Action anticipated.
 - Nominating and Board Development Committee update
 - Board appointment
 - Oath of Office (if applicable)
 - Director's report: Questions and discussion; FY27 budget requests
 - Friends of the Library: Action anticipated
 - FOL update
 - Board liason discussion and possible motion to appoint
 - Committee Discussions
 - A: Finance and Budget Committee: Budget planning discussion.
 - B: Governance and Policy Committee: Bylaw review discussion.
 - C: Personnel Committee: Update
- New business:** Public Notice: In accordance with the Board's bylaws, notice is hereby given of the Board's intent to amend the bylaws. Action may occur at a future meeting following the required notice period.
- Public Comment**
- Director comments. Trustee comments.**
- Executive Session:** Planning and support with library director

BOULDER AREA EVENTS CALENDAR

MARCH

05 BOULDER TRANSITION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (BTAC). 8 am, City Hall.

10 TINKERLABS. 4 pm, Boulder Community Library.

14 CORNED BEEF & CABBAGE DINNER. 5-6:30 pm, Boulder Fire Hall, 207 W. Second Ave., & Boulder-Basin Senior Center. Fundraiser for fire company.



15 BOOK LAUNCH. 2 pm, Art Mine, Cataract Creek Rd., Basin. "This Poem of a Life," by Kerri Kumasaka.



17 BINGO BONANZA, 5:30 pm, Boulder Senior Center. Bingo & taco bar, \$8. Fundraiser for child care facility.

17 DEVON GATES, NAOMI MOON SIEGEL & FRIENDS, 6:30 pm, Art Mine, Cataract Creek Rd., Basin. Jazz music.

20 CHILD DEVELOPMENT SCREENING. 10 am-12 pm, Boulder Elementary School. Free for children 3-5 within Boulder Elementary School District.

ONGOING LOCAL TRANSPORT SERVICES. Mon-Fri, 8 am to 4 pm, based on driver availability. Reservation required: (877) 287-3156.

JEFFCO FOOD SHARE: Second Thursday of each month, noon to 2 pm, Boulder Life Church.



To list an event, call 225-3821 or email info@boulder-monitor.com

FREE CHILD DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

MARCH 20, 2026 • 10 AM - 12:30 PM

BOULDER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL • 225 S. WASHINGTON, BOULDER

Do you have a preschooler 3-5 years of age who lives within the boundaries of the Boulder Elementary School District? We will help answer questions and concerns you have regarding possible delays in speech and language, learning skills, and motor skills.

PLEASE CALL THE BOULDER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL OFFICE AT 225-3316 TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT.

Jefferson County Planning Board Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, Mar. 11, 7:00 PM

Clerk & Recorder's Office, Boulder
 Or via Zoom: Phone: 1-646-558-8656 or zoom.com/join.
 Enter meeting ID 671 828 8589

- Agenda:**
- Call to order; Establish a quorum. Public comment on matters not on the agenda. Correspondence & Communication: County Commissioners; Planning Department. Review minutes.
 - New Business:**
 - a. Discuss and decide on updating bylaws
 - Old Business:** Update on Consolidated Land Use Board
 - Other Business**
 - Next Meeting; adjournment**

BIG SKY PASSENGER RAIL AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

Wednesday, Mar. 11, 11 am-12:30 pm

See agenda and information for joining the meeting virtually at: <https://www.bigskyrailmt.gov/upcoming-meetings>

Call in information
 406-384-636
 Conference ID: 102153781#

The Monitor is moving to a new website! Details next week.

WHO TO CONTACT IN GOVERNMENT

All listings are accurate as of time of publication

FEDERAL	STATE	JEFFERSON COUNTY (cont.)	CITY OF BOULDER
U.S. Senator Steve Daines (202) 224-2651; (406) 443-3189 Tim Sheehy (202) 224-2644; (406) 441-1069 U.S. Representative Troy Downing (202) 225-3211; (406) 502-1435 Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest Supervisor's Office: (406) 449-5201 Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forest Supervisor's Office: (406) 683-3900 U.S. Bureau of Land Management Western Montana District Office (406) 533-7600	State Senator Becky Beard, SD-38 becky.beard@legmt.gov (406) 479-3048 State Representative Mark Reinschmidt, HD-75 mark.reinschmidt@legmt.gov JEFFERSON COUNTY County Commission Dan Hagerty dhagerty@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov (406) 225-4025. Cell: (406) 565-3162 Cory Kirsch ckirsch@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov (406) 225-4028. Cell: 949-3346	County Commission Craig Doolittle cdoolittle@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov (406) 225-4026; Cell: (406) 949-8187 Clerk & Recorder Ginger Kunz gkunz@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov (406) 225-4020 Treasurer Terri Kunz tkunz@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov (406) 225-4100 Sheriff Tom Grimsrud tgrimsrud@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov (406) 225-4075	Mayor: Rusty Giulio rsgulio@hotmail.com City Council Drew Dawson, president ddawson@cityofbouldermt.com Tim Graff tgraff@bresnan.net Patricia Lewis radon.gal@gmail.com Bear Taylor mtnomad2015@gmail.com City administrator Brian Bullock cityadministrator@cityofbouldermt.com (406) 225-3381

JEFFERSON COUNTY WEATHER FORECAST

	WEDNESDAY Mar. 4	THURSDAY 5	FRIDAY 6	SATURDAY 7	SUNDAY 8	MONDAY 9
BOULDER	PARTLY SUNNY HIGH 50° LOW 32°	MOSTLY CLOUDY 42° 27°	PARTLY SUNNY 43° 26°	PARTLY SUNNY 50° 40°	MOSTLY CLOUDY 55° 39°	PARTLY SUNNY 46° 21°
CLANCY/MT CITY	PARTLY SUNNY HIGH 53° LOW 34°	MOSTLY CLOUDY 42° 29°	PARTLY SUNNY 44° 29°	PARTLY SUNNY 51° 43°	MOSTLY CLOUDY 56° 40°	PARTLY SUNNY 46° 22°
WHITEHALL	MOSTLY CLOUDY HIGH 54° LOW 35°	MOSTLY CLOUDY 46° 27°	PARTLY SUNNY 47° 26°	PARTLY SUNNY 53° 41°	PARTLY SUNNY 59° 42°	PARTLY SUNNY 52° 42°

GET THE LATEST FORECAST ONLINE AT BOULDER-MONITOR.COM/WEATHER

COUNTY

Clancy Water leans toward well easement

Continued from Page 1

both tracks simultaneously: executing an easement while also getting a property appraisal.

"I'd love to know what the dollar price of that approximate acre is," Hammer said. "If we owned it, it would make you sleep a lot better at night."

But when Hammer asked whether the board should get an appraisal, Johnson pushed back.

"I don't know if that's what we want to spend the money on at this point in time," Johnson said. "Let's say, 18 months down the road, we now have the ability to move forward with the project – that appraisal won't be any good."

Anderson added that permanent easements are common practice for similar water projects across Montana. She cited the Central Montana Regional Water Authority, which uses permanent easements for its wells in central Montana. The city of Three Forks recently completed well projects, with one well on a permanent lease agreement and another on property the city owns.

Anderson noted that funding agencies are unlikely to pay



Clancy Water and Sewer District board member Bill Hammer, HydroSolutions' Dave Donohue, and former Great West engineer Joel Pilcher assess a potential well site on the Marks property in 2025. (Chick Bruce/The Monitor)

more than an appraisal value, which could complicate negotiations if Marks believes the property is worth more.

The board ultimately decided to delay its easement vote until after Jefferson County Attorney Steve Haddon reviews the protective language.

"I think having that legal

mind just take a look at it, make sure it's good, is a good idea," Anderson said.

The easement includes provisions for Marks to connect up to 10 future residential lots to the water system without paying impact fees, though those connections would pay the same rates as other district users. Marks has

waived any annual lease payment in exchange for the future connections.

Johnson said he supports that arrangement. "More users would be a benefit to the people within the district who are paying a very high price," Johnson said.

The board's next meeting is scheduled for March 25.

AROUND THE COUNTY

Rental tax reduction deadline extended

Governor Greg Gianforte last week extended to March 20 the deadline for property owners to apply for the homestead or long-term rental tax rate reduction.

The move was made after the Department of Revenue informed legislators that long-term rental property owners, or landlords, had been slow to apply for the reduction, which previously had a March 2 deadline.

Electronic applications must now be filed at homestead.mt.gov by midnight March 20, while applications sent by mail need to be postmarked on or before that day.

Jefferson County is home to just under 800 rental units, according to U.S. Census data. Visit the state's homestead website to determine your eligibility.

Clancy man dies in motorcycle accident

A Clancy man died last month just over a week after losing control of his motorcycle in central Helena and crashing into a curb, according to Montana Highway Patrol.

Driving southbound on N. Benton Ave. at "a high rate of speed" around 10 a.m. on Feb. 6, the impact ejected the 26-year-old into a street sign and a tree. The man, identified by the Lewis & Clark County Sheriff's Office as Evan Wray, was taken to Billings Clinic for treatment but succumbed to his injuries Feb. 14.

Authorities suspect alcohol, drugs, and speed played a role in the accident.

Prescribed burn near Lump Gulch

The U.S. Forest Service performed a prescribed burn Monday of 700 acres in the Brooklyn Divide area of Helena-Lewis & Clark National Forest, northwest of Clancy's Lump Gulch.

Rhodes to join Basin School board

Basin Elementary school board trustee Terry Heaton will be replaced by Basin resident DeDe Rhodes when his term expires in May.

Rhodes, who previously served on Basin's water and sewer board and a transportation board in Texas years ago, has been working with a group of community volunteers to help the school reopen since it entered non-operational status last June.

"The best way I can help now is to get on the school board to see if we can save the school," said Rhodes, adding that the school board has had difficulty communicating with the state Office of Public Instruction.

"They're still having issues

with OPI," she said. "I think I can do more."

Heaton was appointed to the Basin school board in February 2022 following the resignation of a trustee whose term would have ended in May 2023. "After my appointment expired, I began serving a full three-year term won by acclamation," he said.

Rhodes plans to continue working with her husband Richard, who has filed to run for Jefferson County Commissioner, school board member Scott Brock, and others, to fix up a church-owned Basin home they plan to offer rent-free to the school's expected new teacher.

— David Lepeska



DeDe Rhodes, who previously served on Basin's water and sewer board, will join the Basin School board in May.

Licenses on sale at FWP

As of Mar. 1, hunters and anglers are able to buy 2026 hunting and fishing licenses and apply for special permits via Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Hunting license fees run from \$5 for a migratory bird to \$125 for a bison, goat, or moose. State legislators made significant changes to Montana's hunting regulations last year, so hunters and anglers are urged to read the fine print.

Conservation licenses, aquatic invasive species prevention passes, and base hunting license fees must be purchased separately from animal-specific hunting licenses. Visit the FWP website to learn more.

Welcome to the UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

We are located...
in **Clancy** at 6 N. Main St with Sunday services at 10 am
in **Boulder** at 211 W Centennial Ave with Sunday services at 11:30 am

We would love to greet you!!!

Pastor Val Colenso, (406) 696-0886

Welcome to Worship!
FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

SUNDAY
9:30 Bible Study • 10:45 Worship service
WEDNESDAY
6:00 pm Services

Friendly People & Bible Preaching
5 Friendship Lane, Montana City
(406) 442-8080

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD

Pastor Gideon Pullmann
(402) 243-3185
Sunday Service 10:30 am
Wednesday Class 6:30 pm

LIFE CHURCH

Morning Service: Sundays, 10 am
Wednesday Service: 6:30pm
Young Adult Gathering: Sundays, 2 pm
Youth: Tuesdays, 6:30 pm
60+: 4th Friday of the month, 6 pm
Phone: 406.417.8150
LifeChurchBoulder.org

CROSSWORD: Singers & songs

STATEPOINT CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Comprehend
6. It has no staying power?
9. Auditioner's hope
13. Prevention measure?
14. Ill temper
15. Poetic although
16. Brooke or John Jacob, of New York
17. Downhill equipment
18. Beau
19. "What Was I Made For?" singer
21. "Fast Car" singer
23. Part of URL
24. Peephole glance
25. Morning drops
28. 1920s art style
30. Reduce, as in standing
35. Big Bang's original matter
37. Lad's counterpart
39. Connection
40. Milton Bradley's game
41. Tea from certain region of India
43. Some bent pipes
44. Rose oil
46. Zeus' wife
47. Remove from a manuscript
48. What bird did, homewise
50. Hyperbolic sine
52. "____ and the City"

53. Prejudice
55. "Wow!"
57. "Song Sung Blue" singer
61. "I Just Called to Say I Love You" singer
64. Barrel racing meet
65. ____ Maria
67. Shockingly graphic
69. Not upright
70. Bathtub libation
71. Food contaminant
72. W on a light bulb
73. Consume
74. Ayes

DOWN

1. Former Portuguese colony in India
2. Deceptive maneuver
3. Naysayer's favorite prefix
4. Upbraid
5. 1/3rd of a hockey game
6. Phish homophone
7. One of Indiana's quests
8. Prepare for winter takeoff
9. Alka-Seltzer sound
10. Nucleus plus electrons
11. Actress Perlman
12. Tattered's partner
15. Rouse
20. Inscribed pillar
22. He had
24. Own
25. "Hurricane" singer

26. Like March Madness' eight
27. Hair extensions
29. "Folsom Prison Blues" singer
31. "Walk on the Wild Side" singer
32. Wheel shafts
33. Tutu fabric
34. English county
36. Source of protein
38. Delhi wrap
42. Popular lassi fruit
45. Restart computer
49. Clamor
51. "The Boys of Summer" singer
54. "Bad news travels fast", e.g.
56. Draw a conclusion
57. Pull out a pistol
58. Letter before kappa
59. Type of mine passage
60. Cheesy sandwich
61. Hit the road
62. Cupid's counterpart
63. Rub the wrong way
66. Road, in Rome
68. Bad-mouth, slangily

CROSSWORD

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72						73			74			

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For crossword puzzle solution, see page 8

OPINION

Public lands up for grabs?

Have you ever said something you wish you could take back? Pretty much all of us are familiar with foot-in-mouth disease.

EDITOR'S NOTE



David Lepeska

But that, apparently, is not how former U.S. Congressman Steve Pearce feels about calling, in 2012, for the sale of public lands in the West, arguing “most of it we do not even need.” Despite his vast experience in the extraction industry, or perhaps because of it, Pearce is President Donald Trump’s nominee for director of the U.S. Bureau of Land Management, which oversees 245 million acres, a 10th of the country. At his confirmation hearing with the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee last week, the most aggressive questioner may have been Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden, who asked Pearce about his 2012 comment.

“You no longer agree with the statement you made years ago?” Wyden queried.

“Senator,” Pearce responded, “I’m not so sure that I’ve changed.”

The former Congressman’s current mindset may soon be of real concern to Montanans, who enjoy more than 8 million acres of BLM land. Jefferson County is home to more than 92,000 of those acres (9% of the county), with parcels stretching from Montana City to south of Cardwell.

Some are forgettable, but many are locally cherished hunting, fishing, grazing, and recreating destinations, like the Clancy Creek pond where young anglers catch their first fish, or the Elkhorns lowlands where Lazy T Ranch cattle enjoy a seasonal nibble.

Already more than 100 BLM parcels in Jefferson County have been marked “available for disposal” and may soon be up for sale, as The Monitor reported in September. The clearest insight into Pearce’s plan for Montana’s BLM lands may be a look at his record.

Highly decorated for his Air Force service in Vietnam, Pearce owned an oil and gas services company in New Mexico before selling it upon winning office and representing the state’s 2nd District from 2003 to 2009 and 2011 to 2019.

In 2005 he supported a budget bill provision to allow the BLM to sell mineral-rich lands for below market value. He criticized Teddy Roosevelt’s “big forests,” and in the 2012 letter mentioned above, called for the selling off of public



Steve Pearce at a hearing Feb. 25 on his confirmation to be director of the Bureau of Land Management. (Via video courtesy of the U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources)

In 2012, then Congressman Pearce called for the sale of public lands in the West, arguing “most of it we do not even need.” When asked about that position at his recent confirmation hearing, Pearce replied: “I’m not so sure that I’ve changed.”

lands to pay down the deficit.

Four years later he co-sponsored a bill to speed up the sale of BLM lands, though he’s also made a few public lands-friendly moves. In 2012, Pearce introduced legislation to protect New Mexico’s Organ Mountains with a national monument designation. The next year he publicly called for greater recreation access to BLM lands.

In his hearing, he talked about helping ranchers navigate BLM permitting and vowed that local input would be his guiding light. “I don’t visualize selling large swaths of land,” Pearce added, pointing out that the law bars such sales.

That’s true: the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) stipulates that the sale of any parcels larger than 2500 acres must gain Congressional approval. Yet the FLPMA empowers the BLM chief to make smaller discretionary sales and places no limit on how many under 2500-acre parcels the bureau can sell.

Each must meet one of three criteria: difficult or uneconomic to manage; no longer needed for the purpose for which it was acquired; or its disposal will serve an important public objective, such as economic development.

With the committee (11 Republicans, 9 Dems) expected to vote on his nomination Wednesday morning, those bars

would seem within reach of a future director Pearce. The League of Conservation Voters, which ranks lawmakers’ voting records on a land conservation scale of 0 to 100, gives him a lifetime rating of four.

Given a chance to query the nominee, Montana Senator Steve Daines posed just two questions. He asked Pearce whether he’d continue to support hunting, fishing and recreation access on BLM lands and, hinting at logging projects, whether the U.S. should increase the scale of forest management on BLM lands. In both cases, Pearce said only: “Absolutely, Senator.”

If confirmed, Pearce has vowed to hand over control of his oil fracking services company, Trinity Industries, to his wife. Yet with the Senate expected to vote on his nomination this week, many hunters, veterans, and environmental activists remain dubious. The Vet Voice Foundation, a veterans advocacy group, is spearheading a campaign against Pearce’s confirmation with a website that dubs him “Selloff Steve.”

“Pearce’s record makes him profoundly unfit to lead the BLM,” Ben Super, Montana Conservation Voters’ Education Fund executive director, said in a statement. “For decades, he has worked to weaken public-land protections, promote the sale and transfer of federal lands, and

advance the interests of the oil and gas industry over the interests of the American people.”

Super pointed to January Raba Research polling which found that 75 percent of Montanans oppose Pearce’s BLM nomination. “Montanans will hold members of Montana’s congressional delegation accountable for this decision and for the impacts it has on our lands, waters, and outdoor way of life,” he added.

Montana Wildlife Federation President Mike Mershon attended Pearce’s hearing and also cited Raba’s survey results. “We ask Senator Steve Daines and Senator Tim Sheehy to reflect the will of Montanans.”

In addition, 97% of the Raba survey participants described Montana’s public lands as either very or somewhat important to the state and their community, while 90% expressed concern about losing cattle grazing leases and fishing and hunting access on BLM lands under Pearce.

This seems reasonable, given the Trump administration’s view of extraction. At a December meeting of the Elkhorn Working Group, BLM Butte Field Manager Lindsey Babcock outlined a planned exploratory project for gold on BLM land east of Jefferson City, explaining that it aligned with White House policy.

Continued on Page 5

Does AI have a place in education?

In a recent article in the *Philipsburg Mail*, a group of local school board representatives and staff weighed in on Artificial Intelligence (AI). This subject is getting heightened attention here in Montana, nationwide and around-the-world. My strong interest in this topic reflects my service on the governing board of the Montana Digital Academy, the state’s online educational program, and my seat on the state legislature’s School

Funding Interim Commission.

In the mid-February article, school reps and staff keyed in on the relevant integration issues for Montana’s schools. First, it seems we are experiencing a rush to get AI implemented “yesterday” due to the competitive educational challenges and economic opportunities. I’m pleased that our county’s educational leaders are asking the pertinent questions about the scaffolding on which AI is constructed: Are we poised to learn patterns or to develop more true, spatial understanding? What guarantees for students’ privacy need to be considered? Who codes this technology/who are the software engineers? Who detects inaccuracies? Are we adequately aware of “group think”

as opposed to critical thinking skills?

Secondly, we can acknowledge that AI is already bringing a multitude of benefits to our modern communities including: health care advancements, weather predictions, and scientific research and technological progress. At the same time, we must define and consider the true nature of risks and safeguards. The Montana Office of Public Instruction guidelines note, as stated in the article, “AI must be used in ways that reinforce learning, not undermine it.”

Fundamental to these considerations is the reality that AI spending will need to be addressed. We’ll also need to develop a strategy for supports, including the building of data centers and providing resources and energy supplies.

With astute leaders asking the hard questions, appropriately paced introduction into schools, and the monitoring of beneficial versus threatening data generation will result. We can stay abreast with the state-of-the-art technology, and hopefully matriculate students who will provide the next generation of human intelligence to drive the advancement of AI technology as partners, not just users.

We Montanans are weighing in on this time-sensitive topic as it relates to our education process. It remains my honor and privilege to serve the voters of Senate District 38 and our state.

Contact Sen. Beard at becky.beard@legmt.gov

FROM THE FLOOR



Becky Beard

state’s online educational program, and my seat on the state legislature’s School

THE MONITOR

SERVING THE FUTURE OF JEFFERSON COUNTY

Phone: (406) 225-3821
Mail: P. O. Box 66, Boulder, MT 59632
Office: 104 W. Centennial, Boulder, MT
www.boulder-monitor.com

STAFF

Keith Hammonds
Publisher
keith@boulder-monitor.com

Jackie Dyer
CFO
jackie@boulder-monitor.com

Alisa Smith
Office manager & Ad sales
alisa@boulder-monitor.com

David Lepeska
Editor-in-chief
david@boulder-monitor.com

Eliza DuBose
Lead Reporter
eliza@boulder-monitor.com

Piper Heath
Lead Reporter
piper@boulder-monitor.com

Owner: Response Media, LLC

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COUNTY

Former rep DeVries files to run again for HD 75 seat

Continued from Page 1

“If you move it to that system voluntarily, giving where you want your money to go, and move it away from coercively extracting it from people, you’ll see a pure reflection of what the people want from the government,” DeVries explained.

Asked about the risk that such a system might fail to generate adequate government funding, he asserted that such thinking “besmirched” Montanans’ character.

He argues that voters with no children in public school – the childless, the elderly, and those with homeschooled or private schooled kids – should be able to opt out of property taxes allocated to state education. “The people who want and use public education should be the ones who are paying for it,” said DeVries.

Montana’s public schools, which face a \$100 million maintenance and infrastructure deficit, receive roughly 30% of

their funding from property taxes. DeVries remained unconvinced that reduced property tax payments would hurt public education. “It’s not undermining something to not pay for it,” he said.

DeVries proposed a similar tax exemption for voters without kids enrolled in public schools in 2019, but it failed in process. In all, he sponsored four bills during his lone legislative session. Only one, outlining a change to insurance filing procedures, became law. He voted no on several popular bills, including one that directed coal tax payments toward rural revitalization.

During the 2019 legislative session he described abortion as “a plague on Indian culture and the genocide against your own children,” and later apologized to the state’s Native American officials due to public pressure. He later told The Monitor that he regretted not standing his ground and that the genocide comparison was fair.

Though strident in his Christian ideals, DeVries shies away from the label Christian Nationalist. “I don’t want a Christian prince,” he said, adding that his faith remains central to his governing philosophy. “I don’t follow and agree with the idea that church and state, the way people think of it today, need to be separate.”

Every law, DeVries explained, is “a reflection of somebody’s religion, somebody’s moral system.” His view is that Christianity offers the best path. “A society will have either Christ or chaos,” he said.

DeVries plans to refuse campaign donations and, if he wins, his state salary. “It’s a large amount of money that all comes from the pockets of Montanans, people in the district,” he said.

If he’s able to defeat his opponents in November, DeVries would consider it a mandate for the ideals of God. “It must mean enough people want me to exercise that discretion,” he said.



“I don’t follow and agree with the idea that church and state, the way people think of it today, need to be separate,” DeVries said. Every law is “a reflection of somebody’s religion, somebody’s moral system.” His view is that Christianity offers the best path. “A society will have either Christ or chaos,” he said.

DEQ winter debris burning restrictions come to end

By DOUG DODGE
Jefferson County Fire Warden

The end of February marks the end of the Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) winter debris burning restrictions period in Jefferson County. Debris burning (any fire over 48” in size) still requires the purchase of

a county burn permit, and burners must activate their permits each day of their burn. Permits are available online at <https://app.egovmt.com/burnpermit/> or in person at the Sheriff’s Office in Boulder.

Those wishing to conduct debris burning need to be aware of their responsibilities before

they light their fires. Weather conditions should be reviewed and burning avoided if wind is predicted either on the day of planned ignition or for the days that follow. Additionally, the area around a burn must be cleared of flammable material, a suitable way of extinguishing the fire must be present, and burns

must never be left unattended.

Weather and fuel conditions are monitored daily by the Jefferson County Fire Warden and area Fire Chiefs. Debris burning may be temporarily closed if conditions are unfavorable for burning. Debris burning will close for the season on July 1st and won’t re-open until condi-

tions are favorable in the fall. Contact the Jefferson County Fire Warden at 406-225-4035 with any questions.

Doug Dodge is Jefferson County’s fire warden and disaster and emergency services coordinator. Contact him at ddodge@jeffersoncounty-mt.gov

Public lands up for grabs?

Continued from Page 4

“The president has declared that gold is a critical mineral, regardless of the size of the operation,” said Babcock. “In Interior, our number one priority is minerals.”

Her boss, the Secretary of the Interior, which includes the BLM, visited Butte last Friday. After touring Montana Tech’s mineral labs, Interior Secretary Doug Burgum vowed to “restore America’s mining legacy by cutting red tape, streamlining permitting and ensuring critical minerals are produced here at home.”

This came a few days after his agency rescinded more than 80% of the regulations within the National Environmental

Policy Act (NEPA), a trailblazing, 1970 environmental law requiring federal agencies to assess the environmental impact of proposed projects.

The department has said it hopes “to cut red tape [and] speed up approvals.” Indeed, the move creates an advisory, not mandatory, NEPA handbook and sharply reduces the need for public weigh-in and governmental study before a public lands project gains approval.

Back at the hearing, the most revealing moment may have come when Wyden first brought up Pearce’s 2012 land sales idea and asked if he thought the West had too much public land.

“The management of those lands is sometimes not as well done as it should be,” Pearce

explained. “And local people pay the price.”

OK, but might not a wiser response to mismanagement be finding better stewards? Rather than appreciating their inherent value, Pearce appears to take a predatory view of the lands that may soon be under his control, lands that Jefferson County folk enjoy for fishing, hunting, and hiking, rely on for grazing, and appreciate as much-needed open spaces.

They say when someone shows you who they are, you should believe them. Pearce seems to have done that again and again.

Lepeska is The Monitor’s editor. Contact him at david@boulder-monitor.com.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Richard Rhodes for County Commission



Hello, my fellow citizens of Jefferson County, Montana. I would like to formally announce my candidacy for County Commissioner in District 2. My goal is to ensure that every person in our community enjoys better services and opportunities for success.

With that in mind, I know that **small business growth will be the backbone of our community**. I have personally opened two businesses in my lifetime and worked as a foreman at a mobile home construction company and a jailer for Jefferson County, Montana. During my time with these businesses, I have seen the struggles to grow and learned the lessons of budget management.

I know that **infrastructure is important and must be maintained** to support our local home-grown businesses. One of the issues I intend to address is the condition of our roads, and their maintenance. Further, I also wish to help our volunteer organizations, such as our Fire Departments and Ambulance service. I have a special understanding of these organizations and their needs. My experience with volunteering is great and varied, from my time with the Alvarado Texas Fire Department to more recently with the Basin Montana Fire Department where I was the Chief for over five years.

Community service and my duty to help others is a cornerstone of who I am. It is this desire for service that compels me to run for office now. I see opportunities to help businesses and our community to prosper through our future of growth.

I hope to receive your support for this campaign, so that we as a community can address any shortcomings while supporting our commitment to the promises of services we are obligated to provide. Should you wish to contact me with any questions my campaign email is richardforjefco@yahoo.com. My phone number is also here for you at (406) 465-1836, where I am happy to hear concerns and work on solutions to them.

I look forward to a future together working for you and our community at large.

Paid for by Campaign Committee for Richard Rhodes/Jefferson County Commissioner District #2 - Shawna Glover, Treasurer P.O. Box 236 Basin, MT 59631

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ELECTION 2026

‘Impossible’? Bankhead eyes Daines’ Senate seat

Continued from Page 1

K-9. She is confident the same qualities that made her an unlikely fit for security work are exactly what Montana needs in Washington.

A third-generation military kid, Bankhead grew up moving around: Panama to Puerto Rico, West Point to U.K. boarding school to studying criminal justice and Latin America at Penn State University and joining the Air Force. She started as a personnel officer before moving into special agent work – the Air Force does a great deal of counterintelligence, investigations and protection – and landing some unusual assignments, such as running terrorist informants in Iraq.

In 2011, she was put in charge of protecting the Air Force’s most secret technologies from foreign adversaries, overseeing investigations and operations for 220 global counterintelligence units. Her colleagues saw it as a dead end.

“People were like, who did you piss off?” she recalled. “What my parents taught me is, wherever you are, you just do the best you can. So I quit moping and I got to work.”

By the time she left in 2013, the team had grown from four analysts to ten.

Her child exploitation work, which began with that confession in Japan, shaped her career. She brought the Air Force’s Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) mission to Japan around 2009, when possession of child pornography remained legal there.

She spent a year as investigations director for the International Justice Mission in Latin America, a global nonprofit that investigates slavery, child sexual assault, the commercial exploitation of children and other human rights abuses. From 2018 to 2021 she served as Alternate Commander of the Hawai’i ICAC Task Force, covering Hawai’i, American Samoa, Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

Her operation resulted in nearly 100 arrests, more than 35 live child victims identified and a 96% conviction rate, according to Bankhead. The work required building coalitions across agencies that didn’t always want to cooperate.

“Everywhere I go, the pattern is the same,” she said. “You have an idea, it’s a perfect concept, it’s unproven, and there’s always ego that gets involved. In Hawai’i, we had some pretty major players in state law enforcement that opposed us, tried to sabotage us. But the first arrest we got was a police officer, and after that, everybody was on board.”

These days she is rarely without Lulu, who is trained to detect a flame retardant chemical compound used to protect memory chips in electronic devices, which may hold child abuse material. Years ago, Lulu led Bankhead to a cell phone an inmate had thrown into dense forest outside a Hawai’i correctional facility six weeks prior. Together they did a TEDx talk on how dogs can help protect children from online exploitation.

She and her husband moved to Montana about four years ago, after he retired from the Air Force. The couple is raising a 17-year-old, Bankhead’s stepdaughter Olivia, whom she describes as “way smarter than her parents.”

Bankhead herself retired from the Air Force Reserves a few weeks after launching her candidacy. Asked why she jumped straight to a Senate race rather than starting locally, she pointed out that she knows Washington, not Montana’s legislative history.

“There are people that I worked with 15, 20 years ago that are now at very senior levels of government,” she said. “They’re all messaging me on the side like, ‘Hurry up and get here so we can get to work.’ These are people I would trust my life with.”

She describes herself as a moderate and an “independent Democrat,” and says she is not accepting special interest or dark money donations.

Her primary opponents are Reilly Neill, a former state lawmaker from Livingston; Michael Black Wolf, preservation officer and community leader from the Fort Belknap Indian Community; Michael Hummert, a 2024 U.S. Senate candidate from Helena; and Kate McLaughlin of Kalispell.

On the Republican side, Daines, who is seeking a third six-year term, faces a

primary challenge from Charles Walking Child of Helena. The Cook Political Report, a national political analysis outlet, rates Daines’ seat as safe for Republicans. Bankhead is unbothered.

“How many billions of dollars have been spent on pundits making assessments on elections, and how does that usually work for them?” she said. “I have a history of people telling me that it’s impossible, and then we do it anyway.”

Bankhead’s recent campaign kickoff event, held in February at Helena’s Ten Mile Creek Brewery, drew more than 40 attendees.

“There were people from every political walk of life: Republicans, MAGA, libertarians,” she said. “And I’m like, ‘This is Montana.’ It’s just, who’s the person who we think is going to best support the life we’re trying to create, regardless of political affiliation?”

The issues she is hearing about most on the campaign trail – access to healthcare, mental health resources, education funding, affordability – are likely to resonate deeply across Jefferson County and in East Helena.

On healthcare, Bankhead says hearing about people forgoing care they cannot afford and veterans showing up at food banks has sharpened her thinking. Healthcare access, she says, is inseparable from mental health, and her perspective on the latter is shaped by years of investigating its downstream consequences.

Montana consistently ranks among the top states for excessive drinking, and suicide rates among ranchers and veterans remain above the national average. Bankhead sees both as symptoms of the rural mental health access gap. She wants to see teams of mental health professionals deployed to rural areas through federal contracts, with built-in feedback on what works.

“I think the government focuses their resources on the cities, which isn’t wrong, but rural communities get left out,” she said. “Just showing up is a big deal.”

She sees the same underfunding in schools, with potentially greater impact. When Basin’s 130-year-old school entered non-operational status last year, residents feared losing far more than a building. Similarly, East Helena voted to raise property taxes to build a high school from scratch, and the school has emerged as a source of local pride. In Boulder, Jefferson High regularly pursues state grants to push students opportunities further, recently securing funding for everything from advanced coursework to theater upgrades.

“Education is the cornerstone of a strong democracy,” Bankhead said, hoping to raise teacher pay and redirect some defense funds to schools. “These are the people that teach our children... When we invest in education, our communities become abundant. It’s a trickle-down effect.”

Housing affordability is another key concern. The median home price in Jefferson County is now higher than that of neighboring Lewis & Clark County –



Bankhead’s recent campaign kickoff event drew more than 40 attendees. “There were people from every political walk of life: Rrepublicans, MAGA, libertarians,” she said. “And I’m like, ‘This is Montana.’ It’s just, who’s the person who we think is going to best support the life we’re trying to create, regardless of political affiliation?”

where home prices are rising as quickly as almost anywhere in the state.

And on former ASARCO smelter land in East Helena, Habitat for Humanity and Oakland & Co. have plans for a combined 6,000 homes, underscoring sharp demand. Echoing President Trump, Bankhead hopes to bar institutional investors from bulk-buying single-family homes.

“We’re going to ban that. It’s not that I’m anti-capitalism – this is America – but it reminds me of the monopolies from 100 years ago,” she said. “Government had to come in and bust those up because it was hurting the average American.”

Few topics animate Bankhead more visibly than what she sees as the federal government’s failure to support Montana’s agricultural producers.

“I don’t need to be a rancher to know and respect who puts food on my table,” she said. “And I’ve been really upset about what Congress and the federal government are doing. \$800 million of Argentinian beef coming in and they’re blaming the ranchers for the lack of supply when ranchers are barely breaking even.”

On public lands, Daines has faced a good deal of criticism. In December, he reintroduced a bill to remove protections from more than 100,000 acres of Montana wilderness study areas, drawing condemnation from conservation groups. The nonpartisan Center for Western Priorities last year reported that Daines was negotiating to include public land sales in budget reconciliation legislation, after pledging to never support such sales.

“Our public lands are the crown jewel of America, period,” says Bankhead. “When it’s gone, it’s gone, and I’m going to fight like hell to make sure those interests aren’t sold off...I don’t know any Montanan that actually wants that to happen.”

The June 2 primary will determine whether she gets the chance to make her case throughout the summer and into the fall, leading up to the Nov. 3 general election.

“I would have your readers ask themselves: how well are things going right now? And if it’s not going well, maybe you need to pick someone different,” she said. “Nobody does risk and adventure better than Montana.”

Alani Bankhead on the issues

Healthcare

Bankhead wants to expand traveling nurse and physical therapist programs that already pay premiums for rural placements, and build scholarship pipelines for medical students who commit to practicing in Montana. She also wants to reform what she describes as a deeply wasteful federal budget dynamic: the military’s end-of-fiscal-year scramble to spend remaining funds rather than return them.

“If we incentivize giving the money back, maybe you keep 10% for whatever stuff you want, that would amount to billions of dollars we could reallocate to rural health care,” she said. “And it would not impact mission effectiveness. I can say that because I’m a military person.”

“I know, not only anecdotally but from the data, that a lot of our arrests could be prevented if we had better mental health care – especially for men, because they’re the preponderance of the perpetrators,” she said. “If we had better mental health care, I wouldn’t be arresting as many people.”

Schools

Bankhead wants to raise teacher pay and believes money can be redirected from the federal defense budget to school districts without compromising military operations.

“In the eastern districts, the average income is about \$24,000 a year. You can’t pay for private school. I believe every Montanan should have access to quality education for free.”

Taxes

Bankhead wants to raise the federal capital gains tax exemption on home sales from \$250,000 to \$500,000, arguing that older homeowners are sitting on housing inventory they would sell if the tax burden were lower, and that more supply would bring prices down. She also wants tax incentives for construction companies, which she says never fully recovered from the 2008 financial crisis.

“I was just talking to someone last week and they were saying the taxes are killing me,” she said. “Just like previous administrations have given tax breaks for putting solar panels on your house or buying an EV, I think we should be able to give tax incentives to construction companies to incentivize them building more.”

Farming

Bankhead raised the cancellation of USAID contracts in early 2025 as an immediate, concrete harm to Montana agriculture producers – funding cut off abruptly, she says, without notice or input from the communities who depended on it.

Accountability

For Bankhead, it all comes down to accountability.

“You cannot make them trust you. You just have to show up and say, ‘This is what I’m telling you, and through my actions I’m going to prove to you that this is who I am,’” she said. “We are public servants. They don’t work for us. And that’s the problem with Congress right now – Montanans want government to work for them again.”

SAVVY SENIOR

How to make sure your aging parent is safe at home?

Dear Savvy Senior,

After watching the coverage of the Nancy Guthrie kidnapping case, I'm worried about my own elderly mother who lives alone in another state. I want to make sure she's safe without being intrusive. Are there simple, affordable ways to check in on her from afar?

Concerned Son



Jim Miller

Dear Concerned,

You're not alone. High-profile cases like this often heighten fears, especially for adult children whose parents live alone and may be vulnerable. The good

news is there are several free or low-cost ways to stay connected and gain peace of mind without infringing on your mother's independence. Here are some nice options to consider.

Check-In App

If your mother uses a smartphone, a simple solution is Snug (snugsafe.com), a free app that checks in daily to confirm she's OK. It's used by tens of thousands

of older adults who live alone and want their loved ones alerted quickly if something goes wrong.

Here's how it works: After downloading the app, your mother selects a daily check-in time. Snug sends several reminders leading up to that time, prompting her to confirm she's OK by tapping a large green button on her screen. If she doesn't check in within 10 minutes after her scheduled time, the app automatically notifies her emergency contacts and

High-profile cases like Nancy Guthrie's often heighten fears, especially for adult children whose parents live alone and may be vulnerable. The good news is there are several free or low-cost ways to stay connected and gain peace of mind without infringing on parents' independence.

shares her last known location so help can be sent promptly.

For added peace of mind, Snug also offers a Dispatch Plan (\$20 per month or \$200 per year) that includes multiple daily check-ins. If she misses one, Snug will call her directly to see if she's OK. If there's still no response, they can request an in-person wellness check by local authorities, who will visit her home to make sure she's safe. The app

works with both iPhone and Android devices.

Check-In Calls

If your mother doesn't use a smartphone, a daily check-in call program can provide similar reassurance. Many police or sheriff's departments nationwide offer telephone reassurance programs, often free of charge.

Typically, an automated system calls at a set time each day. If she answers, all is

well. If she doesn't pick up after repeated attempts, or the call goes to voicemail, her emergency contact is notified. If that contact can't be reached, backup contacts are called. As a last resort, local police or emergency services may be dispatched to her home.

To see if this service is available in your mother's community, call her local police department's nonemergency number or the Area Agency on Aging at 800-677-1116. If no local program ex-

ists, private companies like CareCall or ConfirmOK offer similar services for a monthly fee.

Technology Aids

You might also consider simple home technology to enhance her safety. Monitored medical alert systems are among the most common – wearable “help buttons,” some with fall detection, that allow her to call for help 24/7 while immediately notifying you. These typically cost around \$1 per day.

Other options include motion or contact sensors placed around the home to track daily routines and alert you to unusual activity, or a small security camera with night vision, motion detection and two-way audio that allows you to check in visually and even speak directly with her. Basic sensors and cameras can cost under \$35, though they require Wi-Fi and do raise privacy considerations, so it's important to discuss them with your mother beforehand.

While no solution can eliminate every risk, these tools can provide meaningful peace of mind, for both you and your mother, while preserving her independence.

Send your questions or comments to questions@savvysenior.org, or to Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070.

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NO QUOTE WILL BE CONSIDERED UNLESS: It is received at the Jefferson Weed District Office, P.O.

Box H, Boulder, Montana 59632, no later than 12:00 PM (NOON) Monday, March 9, 2026. Quotes will be reviewed March 10, 2026, at the regularly scheduled Weed Board meeting. E-MAIL submissions will be accepted. Any equivalent products listed in the quote must have accompanying labels. Quotes being submitted by email please put 'HERBICIDE QUOTE' in the subject box, if submitting via mail or hand delivery please submit in a sealed envelope containing a complete copy of the quote and any necessary product label with 'HERBICIDE QUOTE' clearly marked on the front of the envelope.

The Jefferson County Weed District Board reserves the right to reject any or all submissions, to waive irregularities, or to accept any quote deemed to be in the best interest of Jefferson County.

Legal 26-015 Published in **The Monitor** February 25 and March 4, 2026
MNAXLP

PUBLIC MEETING FOR WASTEWATER SYSTEM PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING REPORT

The City of Boulder will hold a public hearing on Monday, March 16, 2026, at City Hall, at 6:30 PM as part of the regularly scheduled City Council meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to present information regarding the Wastewater System Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) and gather public comment. At the meeting, the City's engineering representatives will present on the current condition of the wastewater infrastructure, establish where improvements are needed, and present alternatives for addressing those needs to be included in the PER. The public is encouraged to attend. Written comments following the public hearing will be accepted during business hours at the City Administrator's office until March 23, 2026. Persons seeking additional information may contact the City at (406) 225-3381 during regular business hours.

Legal 26-017 Published in **The Monitor** March 4 & 11, 2026
MNAXLP

Scott M. Svee
Jackson, Murdo & Grant, P.C.
203 N. Ewing Street
Helena, MT 59601
Tel. (406) 513-1119
Fax: (406) 443-7033
Email: ssvee@jmgattorneys.com
support@jmgattorneys.com
Attorneys for Plaintiff
MONTANA FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT, JEFFERSON COUNTY
Mary Theresa Clarke n/k/a Mary Theresa Clarke Sands, Plaintiff, vs. Mountain West Minerals, Inc.; John Does 1-10; Corporations 1-10, and all other persons, known or unknown, claiming or who might claim any right, title, estate, or interest in or lien or encumbrance upon the

real property described in the Complaint below which is adverse to the Plaintiff's ownership or a cloud upon Plaintiff's title thereto, whether such claim or possible claim be present or contingent. Defendants.

Cause No. DV-22-2026-006-QT
SUMMONS FOR PUBLICATION
TO: Mountain West Minerals, Inc.; John Does 1-10; Corporations 1-10 and all unknown defendants.

A lawsuit has been filed against you. Within 21 days after service of this summons on you or (42 days if you are the State of Montana, a state agency, or a state officer or employee), you must serve on the Plaintiff an answer to the attached complaint or a motion under Rule 12 of the Montana Rules of Civil Procedure. Do not include the day you were served in your calculation of time. The answer or motion must be served on the Plaintiff or Plaintiff's attorney, if Plaintiff is represented by an attorney, whose name and address are listed above.

If you fail to respond, judgment by default will be entered against you for the relief demanded in the complaint. You also must file your answer or motion with the court.

This action is brought for the purpose of quieting title to land situated in Jefferson County, Montana, and more particularly described as follows:

- C&D Millsite, M.S. No. 1620, located in Section 22, Township 6 North, Range 3 West, Jefferson County, Montana, and
- C&D Placer, M.S., No. 2487, located in Section 22, Township 7 North, Range 3 West, Jefferson County, Montana.

Witness my hand and seal of said court, this 23rd day of February, 2026.
Deanna Brulla
Clerk of District Court
/s/ Kathy Stein, deputy clerk

Legal 26-016 Published in **The Monitor** March 4, 11 & 18 2026
MNAXLP

NOTICE TO OUR READERS: This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertisement that is in violation of the law, though enforcement of the law is not, of course, our responsibility. Our readers are hereby informed that it is our belief that all employment, real estate, merchandise and services in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. Classified ads are accepted subject to the rules of the **Monitor**. The **Monitor** reserves the right to classify correctly all advertisements, to delete objectionable words or phrases, or to edit or refuse any advertisement.

More legal notices, Page 8

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Zinke calls off reelection bid; race for House heats up

By TOM LUETY
Montana Free Press

U.S. Rep. Ryan Zinke said he won't seek reelection in Montana's western U.S. House District on Monday, citing health problems. Shortly after his announcement, conservative talk radio firebrand Aaron Flint and former Kalispell legislator Dr. Al Olszewski announced plans to run in the Republican primary in June.

The development could improve the slim chance of a Democratic contender winning the race, according to one Democratic analyst.

"Neither Olszewski, nor Flint has general election experience for federal office," said Joe Lamson, a veteran Democratic campaign manager who served on the 2020 districting commission that created the western congressional district. That detail could make a difference in the race — if no other Republi-

can candidate is to step forward, he added. Candidates have until Wednesday, March 4 to file with the state.

Zinke, 64, has been elected as a Republican to represent Montana in the U.S. House four times since 2014. He said in his announcement that injuries sustained during his Navy SEAL career had caught up with him and that he needed surgery and time to recover.

"I have made the decision to leave office at the end of my fourth term and not seek reelection," Zinke said in a letter to constituents, which he posted online.

The congressman had been expected to seek re-election in Montana's western U.S. House District, which the Whitefish native has represented since 2023. Zinke was elected Montana's at-large representative in 2014 and 2016, before the state was divided into two congressional districts following the 2020

census.

"I do not take this decision lightly and have informed President Trump, the Governor, and senior leadership of this difficult but necessary decision," Zinke also wrote.

He stated that he is not chronically ill, but had nagging injuries from his military career.

Zinke gave no hints during a Friday visit to Butte that he would announce his retirement three days later. The congressman joined Interior Secretary Doug Burgum for a tour of the Montana Tech campus. He wore his trademark black cowboy hat and appeared relaxed and comfortable as the entourage went up and down stairs through the mining department's labs and testing rooms. In an hour-long roundtable presentation, Zinke took questions from several reporters.

Zinke was appointed President Donald Trump's first Interior secretary in 2017, but resigned

from the position in 2019 during several investigations and political pressure.

Shortly after Zinke announced his retirement, talk radio personality Aaron Flint posted a dramatic campaign video on X, highlighting his role as a radio personality, family man and veteran, while invoking Donald Trump. He also issued a press release stating that he had been endorsed by Zinke, Gov. Greg Gianforte, Senator Tim Sheehy and other Republican officials. The listed contact for Flint's campaign was Zinke's chief of staff, Heather Swift.

Flint, who hosts a three-hour, conservative statewide morning radio show from Billings, staffed Zinke's office as an employee of the U.S. House Clerk for more than three months in 2017 after the representative resigned his at-large Montana district to become Interior secretary. Flint held the position until Gianforte was elected to replace

Zinke in the 2017 special election.

Former congressional candidate Dr. Al Olszewski told Montana Free Press that he was filing to run as a Republican in the western district. Olszewski, a former Kalispell state senator, said he had been watching candidate filings to see if Zinke would run. He said that he suspected Zinke wouldn't.

Zinke defeated Olszewski in the 2022 primary. The race was so close that it took a few days to confirm the outcome.

Four Democrats — Ryan Busse, Russ Cleveland, Sam Forstg and Matt Rains — have announced their intentions to run in the primary in the Western District. Zinke won the seat by 4 percentage points against Democrat Monica Tranel in 2022, and then 7.6 points in 2024 as an incumbent against Tranel again.

Rob Chaney contributed reporting.

LEGAL NOTICES

INVITATION TO BID

Separate sealed bids for construction of Boulder Phase 1 Water System Improvements – Schedule B will be received by City Administrator at the office of City of Boulder City Hall, 304 North Main Street, PO Box 68, Boulder, MT 59632 until 3:00 PM local time on March 19, 2026, and then publicly opened and read aloud.

The project generally consists of, but is not necessarily limited to, the following major items: Construction of Well 5 wellhouse, site and process piping, chemical systems, and appurtenances.

The Contract Documents consisting of half-size Drawings and Project Manual may be viewed or obtained

by either electronic documents online, or a hard copy at the office of Morrison-Maierle, Inc., 1 Engineering Place, Helena, MT 59602. Only firms obtaining documents by these methods will be placed on the Planholders List.

Complete electronic Project Plans, Project Specifications, and Bid Proposal Packet are available at the Morrison-Maierle, Inc. website "www.m-m.net" by clicking on the "About" tab, scroll down to "Projects Bidding", then click "View our current projects bidding page". Select this project from the project list which will direct you to the QuestCDN website. Documents can only be viewed and cannot be downloaded or printed

without purchasing. To purchase and download the project documents in pdf format, click "Download Project PDF" and sign on to QuestCDN.com. Plan documents and the Bid Proposal Packet can be downloaded for a fee of \$40.00. Please contact QuestCDN at 952-233-1632 or email "info@questcdn.com" for assistance in the free membership registration, downloading documents, and working with this digital project information.

A hard copy set of project documents may be obtained from the office of Morrison-Maierle, Inc., 1 Engineering Place, Helena, MT 59602 for a non-refundable price of \$125.00 for each complete set shipped by standard delivery. Payment of an additional \$25.00 is required for express mail.

In addition, the Drawings and Project Manual may also be examined at the following locations:

The offices of the consulting engineer, Morrison-Maierle, Inc., at 1 Engineering Place, Helena, Montana; Montana Plan Exchanges at Montanabid.com; or your regional plan exchange(s).

There will be a Pre-Bid Conference at the City of Boulder City Hall, at 10:00 AM on March 10, 2026. Interested CONTRACTORS are encouraged to attend. A tour of the project site(s) will be conducted after the meeting.

CONTRACTOR(s) and any of the CONTRACTOR's subcontractors bidding on this project will be required to obtain registration with the Montana Department of Labor and Industry (DLI). Forms for registration are available from the Department of Labor and Industry, P.O. Box 8011, 1805 Prospect, Helena, Montana 59604-8011. Information on registration can be obtained by calling 1-406-444-7734. Forms for registration can also be obtained online at "erd.dli.mt.gov". CONTRACTORS are required to have registered with the DLI prior to bidding on this project.

All laborers and mechanics employed by CONTRACTOR(s) or subcontractors in performance of the construction work shall be paid wages at rates as may be required by the laws of the United States and the state of Montana and of Jefferson County in accordance with the schedule of Davis-Bacon prevailing wage rates established by the United States Department of Labor and the schedule of Montana Prevailing Wage Rates established by the Montana Department of Labor and Industry included in the Project Manual.

The CONTRACTOR must ensure that employees and applicants for employment are not discriminated against because of their race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

Each bid or proposal must be accompanied by a Certified Check, Cashier's Check, or Bid Bond payable to City of Boulder, in an amount not less than ten percent (10%) of the total amount of the bid. Successful BIDDERS shall furnish an approved Construction Performance Bond and a Construction (Labor and Materials) Payment Bond, each in the amount of one hundred percent (100%) of the contract amount. Insurance as required shall be provided by the successful BIDDER(s) and a certificate(s) of that insurance shall be provided.

This project is funded in part or in whole with grant/loan funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program (SRF).

Award of the project will be contingent upon receiving funding and award concurrence.

BIDDERS on this work shall be required to comply with Title 40 CFR 33.240 and Executive Order 12138 and Housing Community Development Act (P.O. 93-393). The requirements for BIDDERS and CONTRACTORS, under this regulation and

Executive Order, concerns utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE), consisting of Minority Business Enterprise (MBE), Women's Business Enterprises (WBE), Small Business (SB) and Labor Surplus Area Business (LSAB) and are explained in the Project Manual.

BIDDERS on this work will be required to comply with the President's Executive Order No.'s 11246 as amended, 11458, 11518, and 11615. The requirements for BIDDERS and CONTRACTORS under these orders are explained in the Project Manual.

The applicable goals and timetables for minority and female utilization shall be included in all Federal and Federally assisted construction contracts and subcontracts in excess of \$10,000. The goals are applicable to the CONTRACTOR'S aggregate on-site construction work force, not merely that part of the work force that is performing work on a federal or federally assisted contract or subcontract. The appropriate goal must be inserted in the blank in the Federal EPA Supplemental General Conditions. These goals are applicable to all of the CONTRACTOR'S construction work regardless of Federal participation performed in the covered area.

A bid may not be withdrawn after the scheduled time for the public opening of the Bids specified above unless it meets requirements and procedures outlined in Article 16.02 of the Instructions to Bidders.

The right is reserved to reject any or all Proposals received, to waive informalities, to postpone the award of the contract for a period of not to exceed sixty (60) days, and to accept the lowest responsive and responsible bid which is in the best interest of the City of Boulder.

Legal 26-014 Published in The Monitor February 18 and March 4, 2026 MNAXLP

CROSSWORD ANSWERS

See puzzle on page 3

G	R	A	S	P		F	A	D		P	A	R	T	
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W	A	T	T			E	A	T		Y	E	S	E	S

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

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SPORTS

Girls roll, boys scramble, into division tourney

Coming into last week's District 5B tournament, there seemed little doubt that Jefferson High's girls basketball squad would be among the top three teams to go on to the Southern Divisional. But the Panther boys? Their chances weren't as certain; the boys' conference was a highly competitive free-for-all, with six of seven teams holding a legitimate chance to advance.

SPORTS PLUS



Dan Sturdevant

Sure enough, the Panther girls made it easily, losing to Ennis in the District final but emerging as a number two seed for the divisional. The boys, though, had a rough and tumble weekend, finally escaping with a clutch win in the third-place

game and a ticket to the next playoff round.

The boys opened Wednesday with a convincing 66-51 win over Ennis, which had defeated the Panthers twice during the regular season. This one started slowly: Tyzer Zody put in the first points, Tyler Frydenlund added a basket and Zody hit a three. Logan Frydenlund sank two free three throws and Jefferson was up 11-7 at the end of one.

Ennis came back to tie the game at 23, but a two by Tyler Frydenlund and a three by Zody gave the Panthers a 28-23 lead at the half. After Ennis nearly pulled even again, Tyler Frydenlund and Zody each sank two baskets to make it 38-31. Frydenlund then made three baskets in a row, and Johnny Quigley came up with a huge block. Zody swished a long three, then stole the ball and scored, adding a free throw to seal the win.

That set the Panthers up for a date with Manhattan. This match-up proved a taut struggle: Zody put Jefferson up 9-6 with a three pointer, a slam dunk by Johnny Quigley made it 13-9, and the Panthers held a 15-11 lead at the end of one.

The Panthers were down by two at the half, and by 32-40 early in the third. Jefferson surged to take a 41-40 lead, and Logan Frydenlund hit a three and completed an old-fashioned three to tie the score at 57. Xavier Wetzel made a steal and hit a free throw to give the Panthers a 59-57 edge, but Manhattan came back to tie it at 62 at the end of regulation. In overtime, the Tigers closed it out on free throws and advanced with a 71-67 win.

The Panthers dropped into the consolation bracket, needing two victories to survive. And midway through Saturday morning's game against Lone Peak, their chances didn't look great: At the half, the Bighorns were up 33-19. But Jefferson roared back, outscoring Lone Peak 21-7 in the third quarter and 24-8 in the fourth to take the 64-48 win.

That left one last match-up with Ennis, this one for third place and a spot in the divisional tourney. Ennis held a 18-16 lead after 8 minutes of play, then pulled ahead in the second for a 31-24 halftime lead. But in the third period, the Panthers caught fire: Tizer Zody started the period with a basket, the Jefferson defense clamped down, and the offense outscored the Mustangs 21-4.

In the final quarter, Cam Redfield hit a pair of free throws, then hit a two to make it 49-40. And with Ennis threatening to tie, Zody went to the foul line two times, hitting all four free throws to put the Panthers up 56-50. That's where it ended; the Panthers had made it.



ABOVE: Panther Tyzer Zody drives to the basket over an Ennis defender in Jefferson's opening game of the District 5B tournament on Feb 25. The Panthers beat Ennis, 66-51 in that game — and again, 56-50, to take third place and advance to the Southern Division tourney. (John Smith/The Monitor)

BELOW, from left, Parker Layng, Jaida Jurenka and KK Morris in the Lady Panthers' 66-36 win over Lone Peak. (Dan Sturdevant/The Monitor)



Lady Panthers take second

The Lady Panthers enjoyed a much less eventful path to Divisionals. Their first-round opponent was Lone Peak, which had finished at the bottom of the conference standings. The Bighorns made a go of it early on, staying just three points down after one quarter. But then Jefferson took charge: Kodee Cummings started the second period with a basket, Jaida Juirenka added a three, and Meredith Reider and Josie Oxarart closed out the half with buckets for a 27-15 lead.

The third period was tight: Lone Peak pulled to within 29-23 before Jefferson answered with Brianna Layng's pair of three-pointers to make it 40-27 going into the final period. And then, the Panthers busted loose: It was Parker Layng with a

three, Oxarart with a basket, Layng with free throws and a pair of two-pointers — and suddenly, the lead was 20. Jefferson finished it off, 66-36.

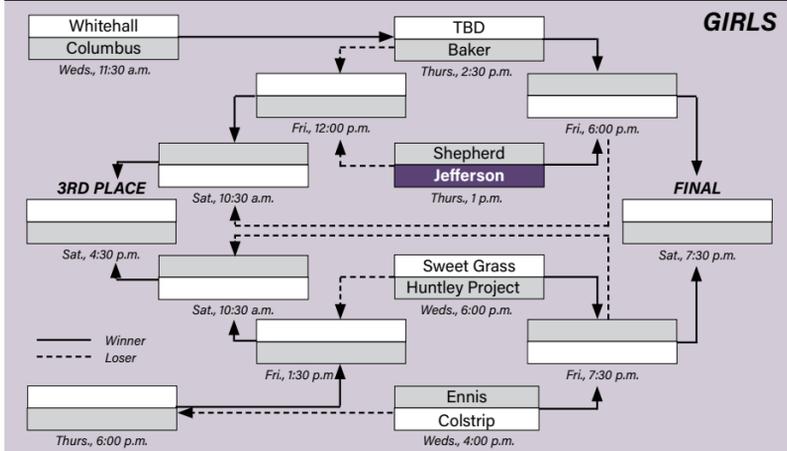
Next up was Three Forks, and this was no closer, with the Lady Panthers sprinting to a 54-15 rout. That put them, as expected, into the final with Ennis, with whom they had shared the regular season crown.

This turned out to be the game of the tournament — two very strong teams battling for bragging rights. Buckets by Parker Layng and Cummings, and a three by Jurenka, gave Jefferson an early lead, but Ennis came right back. Hannah Stevens put down a three to give the Panthers back the lead, and from there, it was back and forth all the way to the end.

Ennis was up 16-12 after one, but Jefferson tied at 18 at the half. Cummings scored at the buzzer to make it 27-30 after three, and Brianna Layng made an old fashioned three and followed with a long three-pointer to put the Panthers up 35-32 early in the fourth. KK Morris' three made it 40-39, and it looked like the Panthers would pull this out — but a long three by Ennis as time expired gave them the win 42-40. What a great game.

The Lady Panthers will open play in Billings on Thursday at 1 p.m. against Shepherd. The boys also play Shepherd, Wednesday at 10 a.m. The top four teams in both the girls' and boys' brackets will go on to the State tourney in Bozeman starting Mar. 12. Good luck, Panthers!

MONTANA CLASS B SOUTHERN DIVISION TOURNAMENT - MARCH 4-7, BILLINGS METRAPARK



BOULDER

Plumbing the potent ranch-city symbiosis

Continued from Page 1

born outside the county, but her years at the head of the Carey ranching clan have made her a local touchstone. Originally from North Dakota, Carey attended Carroll College before moving to Boulder to teach music at the Montana Development Center. Arriving via the now-defunct train line, she had to walk four miles to Boulder on dirt roads in three-inch heels and nylon stockings, having never lived in a place without taxis.

After marrying third-generation Boulder Valley rancher Tom Carey, she left her high heels and stockings behind and became the family matriarch, raising their 8 kids on hard work and rodeo. She often volunteered to do the calving season work that the men “were too squeamish” to do.

“At first I thought, I don’t know about a little town, everybody’s going to know my business,” admitted Carey. “After I’d been here a while, I thought, what a blessing, because people knew if things were bad, if you had things going on. If everything was going well for you, they were happy.”

Knowing and being known is now central to Carey’s identity and that of her family. She said she’s delighted with continuing signs of growth in town, like the expanding high school and the new programs at the library, but she worries that the town may become a bedroom community as younger families move in and tend to commute to Helena for work.

She said her sense of community was defined by the fact that “she knew a lot of people” and worried that if people moved most of their day-to-day lives to the city, that sense of care and



ABOVE: Boulder Valley rancher Helen Carey speaks with The Monitor’s Eliza DuBose at the Community Heart & Soul Story Spotlight Night on Feb. 25. The forum also featured Brady Minow-Smith, near right, and Malea Dawson. (Photos by Gabrielle Abel)

familiarity in the town would diminish. Boulder’s identity, it seems, comes from not only knowing your neighbor but caring for them, too.

It was this sense of unparalleled care that motivated Minow-Smith to move back to Boulder from Louisiana after the birth of her son. Minow-Smith has lived across the country and spent time in the Peace Corps in Ghana, Africa, but it’s the tight-knit relationships of home that she wanted her son to grow up with.

“This whole room here helped raise me,” Minow-Smith said, gesturing out to the crowd. “From babysitting me, to teaching me, to running businesses that I hung out at, or going to church, the community raises the children.”

She wanted her son to have the same sense of care and safety she had growing up. If one family was having a branding, they could rely on their neighbors to come help out, and vice versa.

This kind of support wasn’t unique to the ranching community, though perhaps it was more pronounced. “Even if you’re not on a ranch, there’s a good chance that you’re going to be helping out on a ranch at some point,” said Minow-Smith.

She offered two recommendations: one, that Boulder resist the proposed women’s prison, and two, to be careful not to let familiarity become stifling, especially for young kids. “Once someone’s labeled a bad kid, it’s really hard for them to



break away from that,” Minow-Smith said. “Similarly, if you’re labeled a good kid, you can get away with anything.”

However, she also said she’d seen kids at the high school expand their horizons in unique ways because the small school meant most were involved with the arts and sports. Even today, Jefferson High School students can be basketball stars and take lead roles in school theater.



Dawson knows this firsthand. The Jefferson High junior plays multiple sports and is president of the local 4-H club, the Boulder Outlaws. Once again, the unwavering support of her community is what inspired Dawson to get involved with 4-H and run for president.

She’s been involved with the group since she was 6 years old, watching it go from struggling to attract enough members to now considering capping membership. Her work in 4-H, Dawson said, keeps her connected to Boulder and other ranching families.

Dawson said she’s always impressed by how the community turns out for 4-H events, whether it’s giving an additional donation when paying for parking at skiing or buying Christmas trees, even though so many people could find good trees in their backyards.

“That is what’s made me feel like I’m a part of this community,” Dawson said. “My joining the 4-H club doing community service is my way of giving back to the community that’s helped me so much in so many ways.”

Dawson takes great pride in her work and thinks there’s a good chance she’ll return to ranching after college, where she intends to study something in the realm of agriculture. She hopes to study somewhere unfamiliar. “I think that’s natural to not have anyone in the same place and kind of meet new people, see new things, but I would be interested in coming back,” she said.

Outside of her official duties, she continues the tradition of offering a helping hand to her fellow ranchers. “I’m always reaching out to people and being like, ‘Hey, if you need help riding, let me know. I’d love to help.’ And so there’s kind of a sense of where people contact being like, ‘Hey, are you free? We might need an extra hand,’” Dawson said.

In Boulder, community seems to mean going to the next ranch over to help with branding, buying a Christmas tree from the 4-H club when you could cut one down in your yard, and always being someone your neighbor can rely on.

It’s up to Community Heart & Soul, and the people of Boulder, to cherish and maintain this connecting trait into a potentially unpredictable future.

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It is important to remember: IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT.
No matter what the circumstance, you did not deserve to be sexually assaulted.

REGARDLESS OF HOW LONG AGO THE ASSAULT OCCURRED, having a safe place to talk may be important for your recovery process. The Friendship Center provides free, confidential services to survivors of sexual assault.

THEFRIENDSHIPCENTER.ORG
24-HOUR HOTLINE 406.442.6800

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