

OPINION



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Editorial Board

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GUEST VIEW

Honoring legacy of Holland Lake Lodge

CHRISTIAN WOHLFEIL

I started working at Holland Lake Lodge in 1999 and I loved it so much that, in 2002, I purchased it from the folks I worked for. Since that time, my investment and ties to the lodge and the community have only grown.

I've spent more than half my life here, hosting visitors from dozens of countries and every state. I've met thousands of Montanans whose families have been coming to the lodge for generations. In that time, I have worn every hat possible, cooked countless meals in the restaurant, shaken hundreds of cocktails at our eight-seat bar, and welcomed thousands of guests. I've played wedding coordinator to over 300 wedding couples, the most memorable guest being Brutus, an 800-pound grizzly bear.

I have not taken my time as the gatekeeper of this 100-year-old lodge for granted. This is the Montana I love, with rustic charm and million-dollar views that wow each guest. I know these are many of the same values shared by my neighbors. I refuse to risk that falling into the hands of a bad steward.

Like many similar recreational facilities on federal land in the United States, the Lodge operates under a United States Forest Service (USFS) special use permit. This permit allows a privately owned, for-profit business, whose purpose is to sell recreation-style products to the public, to operate on federal land. It has allowed me to make a living, just as similar permits have enabled thousands of small recreational businesses to do the same. We preserve the natural environment for public benefit rather than a multimillionaire seeking to use it as a second home and exclude it from others.

I have long considered making improvements to this business, as I currently utilize only a fraction of what my permit allows; an expansion was planned but never executed. However, I decided the lodge and its legacy are best served with investments beyond my capacity by someone who shares my Montana values and vision. POWDR is a company that was familiar with and embraced the process of making necessary improvements to the Lodge to protect the environment. They have an excellent reputation regarding conservation, sustainability, and the responsible operation of recreation facilities. They share an understanding that many come to the lodge for its quiet, subtle character and respect that its environment is serene and rural. They fell in love with the Lodge and vowed to restore it to its potential for future generations in a way that honors and respects its nearly 100-year history of welcoming next-door Montanans and guests from around the globe.

I am hopeful that our community will be supportive of the improvements we seek. To ensure that future generations can enjoy this special place in much the same way we do today, the Lodge needs substantial improvements and an operator that cares as much about land stewardship as I do.

POWDR plans to have year-round public access to lodging and food/beverages. It is their business to preserve the uniqueness of this experience, as they have done in areas where residents shared the same concerns we do.

Allowing the natural environment to suffer would diminish the lodge's allure and, therefore, the business advantage that the lodge presents. The USFS and POWDR are interested in ensuring local participation in development and welcome public suggestions to ensure the integrity of the lodge remains.

I urge you to do your research about the lodge to help us all plan for its future with intention. I have decided to pass the lodge to another steward, and I know that POWDR is the one my friends and neighbors will be proud to support.

Christian Wohlfeil is the owner and operator of Holland Lake Lodge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mapson is a fighter for liberty

Rebecca Mapson is the common-sense candidate for HD94. Her background in business and accounting has helped others gain financial strength to maintain home ownership and build common-sense budgets. I know she would do the same for HD94. She has been a fighter for liberty and freedom while Mrs. Montana 2018. I urge you to vote for Rebecca Mapson as she will represent us well!

Jan Henderson,
Lolo

enough for knowing where to go and who to talk to solve problems.

On behalf of the affected people in the Big Sky Waiver program, the problem was solved thanks to these representatives.

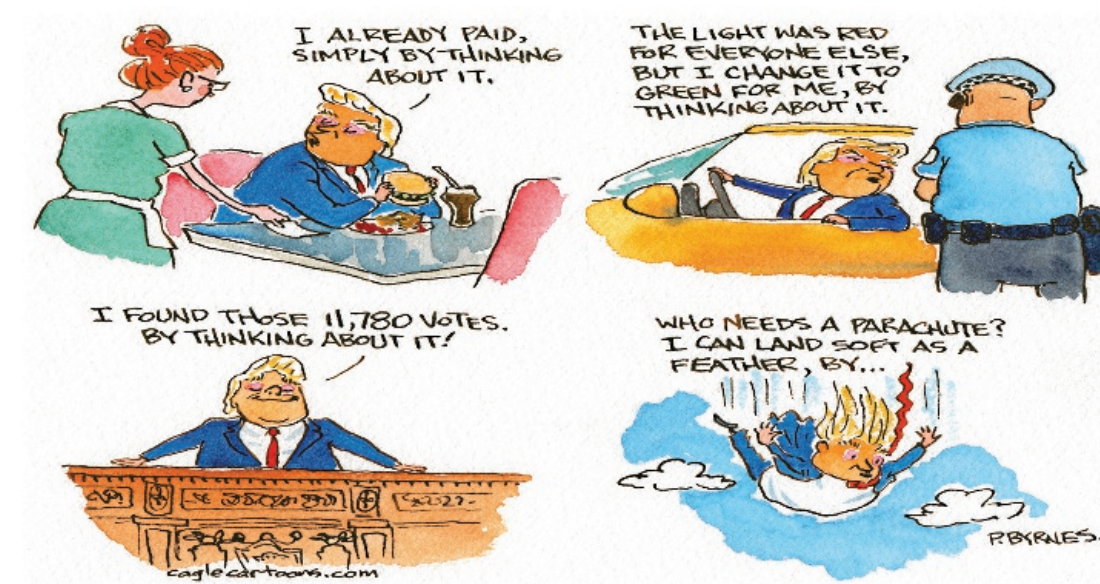
Please vote to re-elect Mike Hopkins in House District 92 and Kathy Whitman, House District 96.

A. Tully,
Missoula

Stop trying to 'get' Trump

Mark Snider: With all due respect, you're greater and smarter than thou comments (Missoulian Tuesday, Sept. 13), which are an all too obvious example of the many who accuse others of doing exactly what they themselves do on an ongoing basis. Millions of us believe it's almost laughable that you and others really believe that we don't think as individuals. Maybe dumping your obsession with "getting" Trump and concentrating on working together will actually make America greater for all, just as it has countless times as long as there's been a good old USA. What a concept.

Michael Doty,
Missoula



GOP MAGA campaigns not working out so well

The state and nation's voters are, as usual, deluged by a tidal wave of campaign promises from candidates as the November elections draw near. And as usual, we are being promised far more than these candidates can or will deliver should they attain the offices they seek. But after the absolute debacle of the Trump/MAGA/insurrection administration — and evidence of failing campaigns by those who followed, supported, or emulated those extreme positions — it appears voters have wised up to the fact that their promises are as phony as the inflated assets valuations that now have their grifter-in-chief sinking in a quicksand of legal woes.

It's telling that a desperate GOP is withdrawing tens of millions of dollars from political races in which the far-right candidates parroted MAGA's extreme agenda that seeks to divide Americans based on any number of issues. Wrong skin color or race? Love someone of the same sex? Came from a "shithole" country? Want to control your own body and decide when or if you want to have children? Won't give the Q-Anon one finger salute at MAGA rallies? Think the climate crisis is real?

The reasons go on and on but

the bottom line remains the same — if you're not with us, you're against us. But lo and behold, it would appear there are far more voters who are not marching in goose-step with the MAGA crowd, and who believe in tolerance, acceptance, and common humanity. And that's causing Congressional Republicans to distance themselves from those positions.

But at this late stage of the game, even those candidates who are trying to scurry away from their far-right primary positions are facing the ugly reality that they're likely to lose. Why? For the simple reason that the vast majority of American voters and businesses prefer stability and predictability to insurrection, lawlessness, and disregard for future generations.

Montanans, sad to say, are having their own experience with broken promises from the GOP politicians. Nothing speaks more than the on-going debacle that now sees the Secretary of State spending \$1.3 million dollars and rising to defend unconstitutional laws passed by the last Republican-dominated legislature. We were told those laws were necessary to ensure "voting integrity." But disenfranchising voters, eliminating same-day registration, and making it harder to vote not only does the exact opposite, it's unconstitutional to boot — which is why they're now being halted in court.

One may wonder why these chest-pounding right-wingers would find the necessity for such anti-voter laws given their sweep of statewide offices in the last election. But as the MAGAs crash and burn across the nation, perhaps they're worried the voters here might also have had enough of their incompetence and deception in governance.

The list is long and runs the gamut from not even responding to requests for information as required by Montana's constitution to basically telling the public to take a hike on wolves, bison, environmental protection, and a host of state "services" as agencies roil in disarray.

It should come as no surprise that if you put "anti-government" candidates in office, they're going to run government so poorly that citizens are dissatisfied. Not that they offer any viable alternative except anarchy...and that's really not cutting it in these days of global, national, and local challenges to our society and planetary life-support systems.

Faced with the challenges for the future, it's no surprise so many voters are ditching the failed GOP policies of the recent past. November will tell the tale — but at this point it looks like a tale of woe for the GOP/MAGA platform.

George Ochenski is a longtime Helena resident, an environmental activist and Montana's longest running columnist.

KENDALL COTTON

Let health care pros get to work

Is a doctor licensed in Idaho or Washington qualified to treat patients in Montana? Almost certainly. Then why does it take 3-4 months for an out-of-state doctor to get licensed to treat patients in Montana?

It's no secret that Montana has severe health care shortages. In fact, our entire state is designated by the federal government as "medically underserved."

We simply need access to as many doctors, nurses, PAs etc. as we can get. Yet, Montana's licensure requirements for out-of-state health care professionals pose one of the biggest barriers to expanding health care access in Montana.

There's nothing preventing Montana patients from traversing state boundaries to seek out health care from doctors in other states. Many health plans even encourage this. But if that out-of-state doctor wants to follow up with their Montana patient on a video call, they must become licensed to practice here.

Many doctors will be the first to admit they don't have the time or resources to become licensed in every state their patients might reside in — besides, they've already demonstrated the qualifications for licensure in their own state. Vendors that assist doctors with licensure in Montana estimate that the entire process realistically takes 3-4 months to

complete. That's a lot of red tape to jump through for an out-of-state specialist who may treat just a handful of Montana patients. Many will simply opt-out.

Thus, licensure red tape can turn what could be quick and easy follow-ups for Montana patients via telehealth into multiple long road trips to see their doctor in another state.

Thankfully, Montana already has a proven policy remedy to address this problem. During COVID, Montana made the "the rapid licensure, renewal of licensure, or reactivation of licensure" a top priority to quickly expand our health care workforce. Montana saw that the complex, time-consuming and expensive state licensing regulations were one of the biggest barriers to allowing out-of-state health care workers practice in Montana. Emergency regulatory flexibilities allowed a streamlined process for medical professionals to become licensed to practice as long as they could prove they had a license in good standing in another state.

Nearly 2,500 medical professionals received a temporary license under this streamlined system, with many practicing virtually. This is a big deal given that some studies estimate Montana has a shortage of around 900 doctors. The expiration of emergency orders means that those 2,500 licenses are now terminated, requiring out-of-state providers to go through the burdensome and costly professional licensing process to continue practicing in

Montana.

To preserve access to health care, the pandemic model of universal licensure recognition is something Montana leaders should make permanent. If "the rapid licensure, renewal of licensure, or reactivation of licensure" helped expand health care access during the pandemic, why not continue to make this a top priority?

Universal licensure reforms even have a potential to be a bipartisan affair. The last update to Montana's out-of-state licensing standards came in 2019 thanks to Democrat Representative Katie Sullivan, which moved Montana closer to full universal licensure. This shows red tape relief doesn't just have to be a right-of-center priority.

We already know that Governor Gianforte plans to bring sweeping licensure reforms forward in 2023, marching Montana closer to full universal licensure by strengthening the department's "ability to recognize licenses issued in another state when those licensing requirements are substantially equal to Montana's requirements." Universal Licensure Recognition could be one idea to boost health care access that both Democrats and Republicans can champion together, for the good of Montana patients.

Kendall Cotton is president and CEO of the Frontier Institute, a think tank dedicated to breaking down government barriers so all Montanans can thrive.



KENDALL COTTON