

HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK NEWS

VOLUME 21,

NUMBERS 1-2,

JANUARY 2011

BIG CHALLENGES IN BIG TIMBER: “PATRIOTS” CONTROL LOCAL GOVERNMENT

When locals decided to develop a riverfront park in Big Timber back in 2006, they received the support of local government and help from volunteers both inside and outside the community. Now known as Dornix Park, it was named after the settlement that preceded the establishment of Big Timber. By 2010, the 50-acre park consisted of public trails, signs and several structures. There was community support and buy in around its development, including the drafting of a master plan.

The goodwill towards the park project began turning hostile following local elections in 2009. The Sweet Grass County Patriots had made it a priority to get their supporters elected to office throughout the county. They succeeded to a degree. Kevin McCauley, founder of Sweet Grass County Patriots, and his fellow right-wing ideologues took over the Big Timber City Council and the mayor's office. Using the power of local government, they've launched a campaign based on anti-government conspiracy theories that claims the local park project is part of a United Nations effort to destroy private property rights.

Kevin McCauley: Tea Partying with the Oath Keepers

Councilor Kevin McCauley is central to the anti-government “patriot” organizing that has occurred in the area. He told the media that his inspiration for forming the Sweet Grass County Patriots was that Americans are “losing our constitutional government.” He claims his group's meetings draw anywhere between 50-150 people. In January 2010, he brought the Montana Director of Oath Keepers, Elias Alias, to town.

The Oath Keepers is a “patriot” group which urges military and law enforcement personnel to sign an oath encapsulating the one-world government conspiracy theory of the anti-government movement. McCauley fits this profile, as he works in law enforcement for the Motor Carriers Division of the Montana Department of (*Big Timber*, continued on page 2)

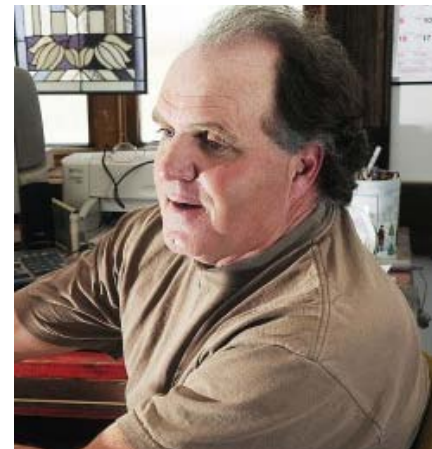


Photo from Billings Gazette

Kevin McCauley
Tea Party, City Council Member

*Human Rights
Network News is a
publication of the
Montana Human Rights
Network, a non-
profit organization.*

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Transportation. For more on the Oath Keepers, see the Network's briefing paper at <http://mhrn.org/factsheetsadvisories.html>.

Elias Alias, whose real name is Franklin Shook, lives in Willow Creek, MT. He serves on the Oath Keepers' national board of directors and publishes the group's newspaper. He has stated his goal is to get an Oath Keepers chapter in every Montana county. Alias has claimed America is currently ruled by an "imposter government" and has warned against the encroachment of the supposed "New World Order."

He has traveled around the state during the last two years administering the group's oath at right-wing gatherings, Tea Party rallies, and anywhere else he is invited.

In addition to bringing Oath Keepers to Big Timber, McCauley, or a person using his name and biographical information, has posted on the group's online Montana forum.

McCauley is also well established in Tea Party circles. His Sweet Grass County Patriots are members of the national Tea Party Patriots. According to a report by the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights about the national Tea Party Movement, Tea Party Patriots harbors many longtime anti-immigrant and racist activists. An online listing for another Tea Party group, the Big Timber Freedom Tea Party, lists an e-mail address for a "kmccauley" as the contact point.

McCauley's presence on the city council has also allowed "patriots" from out of town to access local government. A frequent attendee and

testifier at Big Timber City Council meetings is Livingston's Anthony Miley, the local leader of the Livingston Tea Party

Threats Become Political Tools

In mid-August, the Network wrote to the Big Timber City Council about some threatening remarks McCauley made on the Oath Keepers' Montana forum. In response to an Associated Press article on the Oath Keepers, in which the Network

environment where ideas can be debated without threats of violence.

Since the comments were posted online, the Network acknowledged that McCauley may not have written them. In that case, it recommended McCauley call on the Oath Keepers to not allow any more posts using his name and to delete those that had already been made.

If McCauley did author the missive, the Network encouraged the city council to censure him. The Network stated that using threats of violence

as a political tool is unacceptable for a city council member.

"Our society only works when everyone feels safe enough to speak their mind during the public debate," read the Network's letter. "Mr. McCauley's actions have a chilling impact on the democratic process. The



Kevin McCauley's local group, the Sweet Grass County Patriots, is a member of the national Tea Party Patriots.

was critical of the anti-government group, McCauley wrote:

"P.S.: Travis McAdams [the Network's executive director] is a P.O.S., yes [sic] I said it and will say it to his face. He is a punk. He can't be Irish the name must be made up, He is a disgrace to good Irishmen and if I get half a chance I will kick his sorry ass personally [sic]. If you're reading this Travis, this is a challenge. Br[i]ng it on nancy boy."

In its letter, the Network said it hoped that, regardless of how the city council members felt about the Oath Keepers, everyone could agree that the public square should be a safe

Big Timber City Council needs to make it clear that it will not allow threats of violence to become part of how it conducts business."

The Network received no response, so it followed up with a second letter at the end of September to Mayor Mark Stephens. Mayor Stephens did reply, saying the city council did "not accuse Mr. McCauley due to the absence of proof." The mayor said McCauley was told that "such abhorrent behavior cannot and will not be tolerated." He said the council asked McCauley to contact Oath Keepers and "stop all posts naming him as the author."

In local press coverage, McCauley would neither confirm nor deny that he posted the comments. He claimed it was all an attempt to "smear" and "discredit" him.

(Big Timber, continued on page 3)

(Big Timber, from page 2)

Democratic Process Under Attack

During the Network's interaction with the Big Timber Mayor and City Council, it discovered that the issues it was raising in its letter resonated with what was playing out at local council meetings. McCauley and his allies were disregarding the laws about public meetings and using the city council as a way to go after their perceived enemies.

During a council work session in May, McCauley claimed supporters of Dornix Park were part of a UN plot to abolish private property and national sovereignty. This came in response to park advocates asking the council for a letter of support for a grant they were seeking. The former city council had provided such support. McCauley made it clear that would no longer be the case.

He claimed the park plan was part of the UN's "Agenda 21," which he described as a cancer that needed to be stopped. Agenda 21 calls on governments to adopt national strategies for sustainable development. It emphasizes that these strategies should be developed with wide participation, including non-government organizations and the public. "Patriots" view Agenda 21 as an integral part of their one-world government conspiracy theory. The Big Timber City Council voted against signing a letter of support for park supporters.

Not content to simply withdraw support from Dornix Park, McCauley and his allies decided to try and destroy it. They didn't care if they had to stretch, or break, the rules to do it. The agenda for the council's October meeting included a section titled "discussion of Dornix Park Master Plan."

However, when it got to that part of the meeting, Councilor Justin Ferguson distributed a hand-written motion. It stated that all work at the park would be halted immediately, and all signage and buildings on the property were to be removed. It said any future developments would have to be approved by the council.

The council did not debate Ferguson's motion or take any public comment on it. Mayor Stephens said it was unnecessary, because the issue had already been discussed at prior meetings. However, no public comment had been taken at previous meetings on a proposal to dismantle the park. A vote was taken on Ferguson's motion, and it passed 3-1.

Trying to Stop the Madness: Lawsuit Filed

Following the October meeting, former Sweet Grass County Attorney Tom Biglen notified the city that a request for an injunction would be filed against the passed motion. His letter also said the city council had violated public notice laws by how it advertised the meeting. Biglen mentioned that 50 people had attended the meeting to discuss the park master plan, which is how the meeting was advertised. They weren't allowed to comment on Ferguson's motion.

In late October, Biglen filed a lawsuit on behalf of 35 plaintiffs. The lawsuit states the city council violated the plaintiffs' right to public participation as guaranteed by the Montana Constitution. The plaintiffs also stated they believed prior to the meeting that Mayor Stephens, McCauley, Ferguson and Councilor Randy Rembold had discussed the motion with Sweet Grass County Patriots and the Sweet Grass Council for Community Integrity, a group that formed in opposition to the park. The suit stated that such interaction violated the state's "Sunshine law."

In late October, a district court judge issued a temporary restraining order against the Big Timber Mayor and the three city council members. They are not allowed to remove or tamper with any structures at the park until the lawsuit is settled.

"Patriots" Interested in Dismantling, Not Governing

Councilor Justin Ferguson was not elected to the Big Timber City Council. Instead, he was appointed to fill a vacancy. He told the press that all the "patriot" activity in the area was proof that conservatives were not going to sit back and allow liberals "to push their left-wing agenda upon the citizens." It's debatable if there was such a faction in Big Timber. What is clear, however, is that Ferguson, McCauley and their allies are using local government to implement their anti-government ideology.

Over the years, the Network has witnessed what happens when "patriots" get elected to office. "They have no interest in governing, transparency or being accountable to the people," says the Network's Travis McAdam. "They have only one interest—dismantling and destroying institutions they perceive as the enemy—and they will manipulate and abuse the process to do it.

(Big Timber, continued on page 8)

MONTANA WHITE SUPREMACISTS TANGLE WITH THE LAW

Allen Goff and the Billings Creativity Movement

Allen Goff is back in trouble with the law. He was charged in November with felony assault with a weapon and a misdemeanor count of obstruction.

Goff, an activist and leader in the white supremacist Creativity Movement, has been in and out of trouble since his early teens. Most recently, Goff was acquitted in May 2010 of a felony assault charge for shooting a former Latino friend in the knee during a confrontation outside a late-night house party.

The prosecution had asked that evidence of Goff's white supremacist activity be available to the jury, but the trial judge denied that request. The same shooting incident did result in Goff pleading guilty to a misdemeanor charge of carrying a concealed weapon, and he was placed on probation. He violated that probation when he stole from a store at the Rimrock Mall in August 2010.

Goff is now accused of threatening an American Indian teenager in the parking lot outside West Park Plaza on November 2. Goff drove up to the victim's car, pulled out a handgun, and threatened to kill him without provocation. Two other unidentified men got out of the car armed with baseball bats.

The victim escaped and called police from a nearby store, while Goff and the two men fled the scene. Goff was found hiding in the attic

of a home at 1731 Avenue C, which is owned by Brian and Rodney Samel.

Judge Russell Fagg set the bond for Goff at \$100,000 at the request of the prosecutor, who called the allegations disturbing and extremely volatile. Goff is currently represented by a public defender. The two other men have yet to be apprehended.

Following Goff's arrest, his online profile on a Creativity Move-



Allen Goff's booking photo

ment forum went inactive. The national group's leader, James A. Logsdon Jr., notified the online community that all requests for books should no longer be directed to the Montana Chapter, but rather to him.

While there continues to be concern about other white supremacist activists in the state, this notice by Logsdon indicated further that the breadth of the Montana Creativity Movement is relatively small and principally functions because of Goff. For more background on Goff, see the November 2009 and August 2010 editions of *Network News*.

Flathead White Supremacists Battle Each Other, Target the Community

Montana "Creators," follower of The Creativity Movement, have been active beyond the Billings area for the last few years. A recent addition to Kalispell has boosted the activity level in the Flathead area and brought about internal strife within the area's broader white supremacist movement.

Craig Cobb moved to Kalispell late this summer after getting into trouble in Canada for his white supremacist activism. He is best known for posting the address of and a map to the home of a federal judge, whose mother and husband were subsequently murdered.

Cobb is known for his white supremacist and anti-Semitic activism both in the United States and around the world. He has been active with various white supremacist groups including: The Creativity Movement, National Alliance, and White Revolution.

Cobb's biggest contribution to the white supremacist movement was launching "Podblanc," a video sharing service for white supremacists. Podblanc's content included combat handgun training, homemade explosives how-to guides, and a complete audio recording of the infamous race-war fantasy novel, *The Turner Diaries*. Other videos on the site showed white supremacists beheading and shooting Asiatic immigrants; punching, kicking and

(Cobb, continued on page 5)

(Cobb, from page 4)

stomping orthodox Jews and people of color; and killing an African immigrant.

When Matt Hale, the leader of The Creativity Movement at the time, was arrested and charged in 2003 with trying to have a federal judge killed, Cobb posted the address of and map to the judge's home. In 2005, a man broke into the home and murdered the judge's husband and mother. Asked about the murders, Cobb replied, "I was just fine with it."

In 2005, Cobb moved to Estonia to establish an "International Office of White Diaspora." In 2009, he was incarcerated for endangering state security, public order, public safety, and other public interests and was banned from the country for 10 years. Before arriving in Montana, Cobb was living in Canada. Law enforcement in British Columbia launched an investigation into his online activity, which is ongoing.

Upon his arrival in Montana, Cobb reached out to other white supremacists in Montana, specifically those in the Kalispell area. Beginning in September, Cobb engaged in the public events and film showings that white supremacists in the Flathead had been organizing. In September 2010, he showed a Holocaust denial film with fellow Creator Zac Harp.

Cobb initially stayed at a local shelter, but then he connected with fellow white supremacist Karl Gharst. Both live at the Rosebrier Inn. As reported in the *Flathead Beacon* and on Cobb's blog, a schism formed between Cobb and Gharst, which resulted in Cobb fil-

ing for a restraining order against Gharst in early October.

The white supremacist ideology of the two is very different. Gharst has a long history with Aryan Nations, a Christian Identity group that believes people of color are subhuman "mud people." Cobb primarily follows The Creativity Movement, which is hostile towards any type of



Craig Cobb

Christianity and believes their race is their religion.

In October, Cobb showed another Holocaust denial film at the Kalispell Public Library that was attended by just four people. Karl Gharst and Zac Harp did not attend the screening, but both hung around outside the library.

Cobb's online activity this fall included personal attacks on Montana Human Rights Network board members and local Kalispell service providers.

He has also filed a complaint with the Montana Human Rights Bureau regarding perceived discrimination based on his religion, Creativity.

There's plenty of question whether Creativity qualifies as a religion.

In 2009, a California District Court ruled that The Creativity Movement was not a religion for the purposes of the First Amendment and prisoner worship rights. The court found that Creativity does not deal with ultimate questions like a religion, but rather promotes the dominance of certain members of society over others and fits within a secular belief system.

Noticeably absent from the last few white supremacist events in the Flathead were April Gaede and her husband Mark Harrington. In May, Gaede and Harrington were arrested and charged with assault and criminal mischief for physically knocking a camera out of the hand of a woman.

Gaede and Harrington had been scheduled to go to trial in Kalispell Municipal Court this fall, but a continuance has been granted in both cases at their request. The cases are now scheduled for trial in January and March respectively. Gaede had a modest internet presence over the summer, but this fall returned to frequent posting on the white supremacist site "Stormfront."

She recently called for recruiting amongst white "patriot" groups and praised Cobb's activism in the area. Another local white supremacist, Brian Gray, followed suit. He promoted an upcoming meeting by the Flathead Liberty Bell in January 2011, which will feature 2008 Constitution Party presidential candidate Chuck Baldwin (see related article on page 16). □

“INTERSECTIONAL” CAMPAIGN LEADS TO CURRICULUM WIN

ANALYZING A WIN FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEX EDUCATION

On July 13, the Helena Board of Trustees (which is the school board for the Helena School District) held its regular board meeting at the Front Street Learning Center in Helena. The meeting was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. At 3:30 p.m., a line of roughly 40 people had formed outside the front doors.

Fifty yards from the door, people stood behind a table handing out water bottles and 8.5 by 11 inch foam board signs that read “Vote No” in bright red. The line grew by the minute. A Fox News truck (the Rupert Murdoch variety) pulled up, satellite attached, with an eager camera man inside.

The doors opened at 5:00 p.m. and then shut 15 minutes later – the building was at capacity. A couple hundred people would end up standing outside listening to the meeting as it was broadcast through giant loudspeakers. Volunteers, staff, and members of the Network, NARAL Pro-Choice Montana, ACLU of Montana, and Planned Parenthood stood outside wondering how they had come to attend a public meeting, and ended up at a Tea Party rally where even the topic of nutrition was greeted with fervent boos.

If you live in Helena, you might remember this past summer and fall as a four-month long fight about sex education. No matter where you live

in the state—or the country—you may have heard about the public debate over the Health Enhancement Curriculum in Helena. Countless news stories (local and national), a lawsuit, several public meetings, and the resurfacing of some old right-wing activists made for an eventful summer and fall.

Over two years ago, the Helena

and sex education. In June 2010, after two years of work, the committee presented their work to the Helena Board of Trustees.

The process for approving the curriculum was set to take place in July and August with two Board of Trustees meetings, one for public comment and one for discussion and a vote. Boards of Trustees meetings are usually fairly tame, and the curriculum development and review process had gone smoothly for the last several years.

When the curriculum was released to the public, the Network and several allies, including NARAL Pro-Choice Montana, the ACLU, Planned Parenthood, and the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, were excited about the committee’s work. The curriculum was broad and inclusive.

It was a solid document that was evidence-based, medically accurate, and age appropriate. It covered important information that would allow young people to protect themselves, make good decisions, and stay safe and healthy. Finally, it addressed real problems in our community—from addressing issues of mental illness to rising rates of STIs and teen pregnancies. It recognized that LGBT people exist in our communities and can have lives and families that are just as healthy and happy as any other member of the community. It expressly prohibited teasing, taunting, and bullying of students and specifically gave examples of

(Curriculum, continued on page 7)



Kristi Allen-Gailushas, one of the leading opponents to the Health Curriculum, was also an officer for the Big Sky Tea Party Association.

School District recognized gaps in its curriculum under the general topic of health. The district established a curriculum committee made up of community members with specialized expertise in public health, nutrition, mental health, physical fitness, and a variety of other topics.

This committee was charged with developing a “Health Enhancement Curriculum” for grades K-12. The Health Enhancement Curriculum was to cover four main areas: nutrition, mental health, physical fitness,

(Curriculum, from page 6)

anti-gay bullying that would not be tolerated.

The Network believed that this was a good curriculum that would go a long way toward addressing problems and challenges that exist in the Helena community. We knew there would be opposition, but the curriculum fell easily within national standards that have proven to be effective. Thousands of localities across the country had already implemented similar curriculum and documented positive results.

It was clear in June, when the curriculum was made public, that there was a motivation gap between supporters and opponents. Supporters thought the proposal was a good idea, while opponents thought it would destroy the country and corrupt generations of children.

The first public meeting in July bore out that gap. Supporters showed up, but they didn't show up in the same numbers as opponents did. The Network had organized with allies to turn out between 75 and 100 people. We accomplished that, but most of our supporters didn't make it through the doors as they were coming directly from work.

Opponents, which included leaders of several fundamentalist churches, Mikal Wilkerson (the wife of school trustee Trevor Wilkerson), Kristi Allen-Gailushas (the secretary of the Big Sky Tea Party Association), and Jeff Laszloffy (leader of the Montana Family Foundation) had taken their grievances to Fox News and found a giant megaphone which they employed to agitate and mobilize people in and around Helena.

Fox News ran its first national news story on the Health Enhancement Curriculum on Friday, July 9. Over the weekend, Fox and Friends, Sean Hannity, Bill O'Reilly, and other commentators weighed in on the outrage and social engineering that (in their view) was the proposed curriculum in Helena.

When supporters showed up for the Board of Trustees meeting on Tuesday, July 13, they found themselves in a parking lot full of passionate Fox News viewers, most of whom had clearly never attended a school board meeting or read the proposed curriculum. As the topics

of nutrition, contraception, and LGBT people received escalating boos in the parking lot, the Network and our allies knew that we would have to regroup. And we did.

Organizing at the Intersections

After that first meeting, we stepped back and thought about how we could engage a larger part of the community in the debate over the curriculum. We thought about how we could close the motivation gap and draw out our supporters. We knew we had support. We just had to figure out a way to activate people and motivate them to take part. The Network utilizes a movement building approach that recognizes the intersections of various communities and constituencies. It highlights the necessity of working together, and it was a perfect strategy for mobilizing people around the curriculum.

Because the Health Enhancement Curriculum covered such a broad range of health issues, and because opponents were attempting to use the sex education portion as a wedge (dividing commu-

nities that would benefit from the curriculum by mobilizing around the inclusion of LGBT people or the mention of contraception), it was critical to draw out the way that each portion of the comprehensive curriculum depended on, and simultaneously complimented, the other portions.

Our coalition knew that, if we could communicate to our members and the community at large about what was at stake for youth in Helena using a values-based intersectional approach, we could get our people out to the next meeting to tell their stories. We knew we would need hundreds of people to come out and testify in support of the curriculum. The Board of Trustees expanded the timeline for amending and approving the curriculum, and the Network and our coalition partners set about designing a longer term campaign to engage the community and support the curriculum.

For three months, we reached out to Helenans about how and why youth that are given information about
(Curriculum, continued on page 8)



Jeff Laszloffy of the Montana Family Foundation (left) teamed up with Fox News and other Fox programs to generate opposition to the curriculum.

(Big Timber, from page 3)

That is clearly what is happening in Big Timber.”

Although “patriots” talk a good game about returning to constitutional forms of government, when elected, McAdam says, their political tools are intimidation and harassment. “All of the sudden, it’s the people with the loudest voices and the biggest stockpile of weapons who start dictating public discourse,” he says, “and anyone who doesn’t agree is scared out of the democratic process.”

Big Timber Used to Recruit in Harlowton

The attempted scuttling of Dornix Park was a major talking point when Elias Alias brought his Oath Keepers show to Harlowton in mid-October. Harlowton resident Tim Montgomery welcomed approximately 13 people to his meeting in hopes of starting a local chapter.

Alias told the Harlowton group

that “Our country is in trouble with what we have in Washington D.C.” On his blog, Alias elaborates on one-world government conspiracy theory by describing how he believes “international forces” are plotting to conquer humanity. He uses the backdrop of small towns such as Harlowton and Big Timber as the stage set for fighting such evil.

State Rep. Joel Boniek (R-Livingston) also addressed the Harlowton group and stated that the Second Amendment isn’t about bird hunting. He said there are four boxes which protect our freedom, including the soap box, the ballot box, the jury box and the bullet box.

Alias has also detailed that the formation of an Oath Keepers chapter in Harlowton has been in conjunction with the emergence of the local Tea Party. A recent *Billings Gazette* article featured Harlowton’s Tea Party group which sprung up following 2010’s primary election.

While the *Gazette* article drew a picture of Harlowton as a bastion for



photo from Bozeman Daily Chronicle

Elias Alias
Montana Oath Keepers

Tea Party activism, locals (like they have in Big Timber) have pushed back and declared that these right-wing groups don’t represent the larger community. In Harlowton’s local paper, *The Times Clarion*, many residents have expressed their dislike for what appears to be disruptive and divisive behavior which the Tea Party and Oath Keepers have brought to Harlowton. □

(Curriculum, from page 7)

their own bodies, sexuality, and health become responsible adults and make our communities stronger. We made a decision to highlight the ways that information is a bridge to understanding our own values in the context of a diverse and vibrant community.

For example, instead of focusing exclusively on why it was important that the curriculum was inclusive of LGBT individuals and families, we broadened our focus and talked about why it was important to include a variety of family structures that exist in our community. It wasn’t about stepping away from talking about LGBT families.

Instead, it was about recognizing and broadening the way our community talks about what family means and how supporting strong families creates a stronger community. We talked about how centering the values of dignity, safety, and respect allow youth to understand differences between individuals and families and foster a healthier community.

Meanwhile the opposition was using a broad framework as well. Kristi Allen-Gailushas was one of the most visible opponents. She filed a lawsuit against the school district (which the *Helena Independent Record* stated had “no merit constitutionally”), and she penned a scathing

Op-Ed in the *Queen City News* in which she took aim at not only the sex education portion of the curriculum, but also the nutrition portion, stating: “I am tired of health and nutrition being forced down our throats day in and day out. If I want to take myself and my family to eat pizza four times a week and have McDonald’s the other three days of the week, that is no one’s business but my own.”

In the same piece, she suggested that anyone who thought that children aged 5 to 9 should be included in the comprehensive sex education curriculum “have something mentally wrong” with them.

(Curriculum, continued on page 9)

(Curriculum, from page 8)

Using a broader and intersectional framework to communicate about and support the curriculum, the Network and our allies executed a campaign that included thousands of mail pieces that were sent to households around Helena. Phone banks were organized and dozens of volunteers made calls to members and supporters to talk about the curriculum and ask them to come out to a public meeting and tell their stories.

On September 28, the Board of Trustees took another round of public comment and this time the scene was quite different. Opponents were still out in force, but hundreds of supporters signed up and stood in line to talk about how the Health Enhancement Curriculum would improve the community and give youth the tools they need to live healthy lives.

The testimony lasted six hours and included an array of anti-gay rhetoric, UN conspiracy theories, and sentiment that suggested that all public schools should be Christian. Multiple opponents claimed that “homosexuality kills people,” and that it is an unhealthy lifestyle choice, just like abusing drugs and alcohol. Finally, other opponents claimed that homosexuality is a sin and schools should not be teaching sin. There was also a strong theme running through the opponents that the curriculum was nothing but pornography.

The proponent side told a variety of stories about growing up and struggling to find information about bodies and sexuality. Youth from Helena attended the meeting and spoke about how the current curriculum did them a disservice and the new curriculum would empower them to make smart choices and stand up to peer pressure with factual information. Many youth talked about how important it was to include everyone in the curriculum. The testimony was heartfelt and compelling.

In October, the Helena Board of Trustees voted to adopt the curriculum with a 6 to 3 vote. It was a real win for the Helena community. □

OPPONENTS PUSH RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS AT SYMPOSIUM

Following the Helena School District’s passage of the health enhancement curriculum, the Montana Family Foundation and Helena Youth Advocates held an “Education Options Symposium” on October 19-20. The Montana Family Foundation sent postcards across Helena to advertise the event. While organizers claimed 400 people attended over the two-day symposium, the numbers on Friday alone suggested far fewer. The event consisted of two rooms, one with 37 separate information booths and another for scheduled speakers. Most booths had at least two people working them, while others had three or four. On Friday night, the number of people perusing the tables for information was closer to fifty.

The booths provided information on private Christian schools, curriculum choices, extra-curricular activities for home schooled kids, and home schooling choices. A few booths featured participating organizations, such as Helena Youth Advocates, the Montana Family Foundation, the Home School Legal Defense Association, and the Montana Coalition of Home Educators.

Jeff Laszloffy, president of the Montana Family Foundation and the first speaker in the lineup, started his speech exasperated that there weren’t more people in the room. Most of his talk revolved around a study conducted by the Freedom Foundation and the Montana Family Foundation. The study claimed that, if given a choice, only 10% of people would choose public schools. On the other hand, 38% would choose private schools and 28% would choose charter schools.

Other featured speakers included a panel of parents who home school their children: Pat Haggarty, who serves as the superintendent of Montana’s 22 Catholic schools; Mikal Wilkerson, who started Helena Youth advocates; and Steve White, who serves as a Gallatin County Commissioner and represented the Montana Coalition of Home Educators.

ACLU FILES LANDMARK RELATIONSHIP RECOGNITION CASE

On July 22, seven same-sex couples filed a historic lawsuit against the State of Montana. It takes the state to task for failing to provide legal protections to same-sex couples and their families in violation of the Montana Constitution's rights of privacy, human dignity and the pursuit of life's basic necessities. The suit also says the state is violating the constitutional guarantees of equal protection and due process. It is based on the real harm that same-sex couples in Montana face because the state will not recognize their relationships.

Known as *Donaldson and Guggenheim v. State of Montana*, the suit has been brought forward with the help of the ACLU of Montana. It aims to establish legal protections for same-sex couples that are currently offered through marriage for opposite-sex couples. Because of a constitutional amendment passed in 2004 barring marriage for same-sex couples in Montana, the lawsuit is not seeking marriage.

"Mary Anne and I are part of a family unit, bonded by love and mutual respect and a desire to share in a close relationship that benefits not only us, as partners, but our wider family and the entire community," said Jan Donaldson, a Helena nurse, of her 27-year relationship with her partner, pediatric neurologist Mary Anne Guggenheim.

"We depend on one another, in all aspects of our life together. We want to be able to do that with grace and dignity and to feel secure that our relationship will be respected. We want our relationship to be recognized for what it clearly is – a loving commitment of responsibility wor-

thy of security and protection by the state."

In September, the Bozeman City Commission unanimously passed a resolution in support of the seven couples, including Bozeman residents Stacey Haugland and Mary Leslie, and Mike Long and Rich Parker. The other four couples are Mary Anne Guggenheim and Jan Donaldson of Helena; MJ Williams and Nancy Owens of Basin; Rick Wagner and Gary Stallings of Butte; Denise Boettcher and Kellie Gibson of Laurel; and Casey Charles and David Wilson of Missoula.

Attorneys for the State of Montana, through the office of Attorney General Steve Bullock, filed a motion to dismiss the lawsuit in November. The Attorney General's Office defends the state against lawsuits, and its motion to dismiss was expected. The ACLU will file its response in December.

An attempt to create a domestic partnership registry through the Department of Public Health and Human Services, which would have been available to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples, failed to make it out of the House State Administration Committee on a party-line vote during the 2009 legislative session. A blast motion on the House floor failed 46-54, with one Republican voting in support and five Democrats voting against.

The bill outlined the rights that would be granted to domestic partners by the State of Montana, including health insurance benefits, decisions regarding medical care and treatment, and others. Similar attempts at establishing same-sex partnerships in Montana have failed to

pass both chambers since 2003.

The Network believes that the ACLU's case has merit by clearly showing that the plaintiffs have suffered real injury, and we are hopeful that the ACLU will be successful in its effort to gain basic and fair protections for same-sex couples and their families as this moves through the courts

Update on Missoula Ordinance: Opponents Fail Again

In October, Missoula County District Court Judge Douglas Harkin threw out a second attempt to halt the Missoula Anti-Discrimination Ordinance by a group of anti-LGBT activists known as NotMyBathroom.

The opposition group, which formed during the campaign to pass the historic local ordinance barring discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, sought to repeal the ordinance by ballot referendum. Their first petition, which failed to gain approval by the city attorney, was filed on April 15, 2010 – just days after the Missoula City Council voted 10-2 in support of the ordinance.

The group filed a 109-page petition in response to Judge Harkin's ruling at the end of August. Full of what Judge Harkin called "meandering arguments" and "hostile allegations," the response called for an extension of the 60 days allowed to gather petitions for placing the option of repealing the local ordinance on the next city elections ballot. NotMyBathroom's request to have its legal fees be paid was also denied. □

AN ELECTORAL BRIGHT SPOT: INTEREST CAP IMPOSED ON PAYDAY, TITLE LENDERS

This fall, Montana saw a rough election cycle for progressives who care about and work for social justice. On January 3, 2011, Republicans will hold a 68-32 majority in the Montana House and a 28-22 majority in the Senate. They will also have a 3-2 advantage on the Public Service Commission. These results are something that social justice activists in Montana will have to deal with over the next two years as we work to push progressive social policy, protect public structures, and defend democratic values and institutions.

However, the Network was involved in a major victory for progressives in Montana that happened on General Election day, and it occurred through a ballot initiative. Montanans overwhelmingly voted for Initiative 164, to cap annual interest rates on predatory payday and title loans at 36%. It passed in every county across the state from Petroleum to Cascade to Sanders. This policy (and electoral) win was a long-time coming for lower-income Montanans who get trapped in a cycle of debt after taking out one of these short-term, high-interest loans.

The Network engaged in the I-164 campaign from the start. We trained volunteers, gathered signatures, educated members and supporters on the issue, and then finally executed a get-out-the-vote effort in the days before the November 3 election. The Network communicated with thousands of Montanans across the state through social media, direct mail, public meetings, and phone calls. It's an effort of which we are proud.

On election night, almost 72% of Montana voters took a stand for economic human rights. This is an example of how, with good education, values-based messages, and mobilization, progressive policy measures can win on the ballot. The Network will continue to build on this victory and develop strategies for building

momentum as we face a difficult legislative landscape.

Watch for New "Margins" Report

It would be bad enough if radical-right activists only impacted the communities in which they live. However, over the last two decades, the Network has documented how extreme right-wing ideas increasingly find their way into the political mainstream. During the early 1990s, groups like the Militia of Montana and Montana Free-

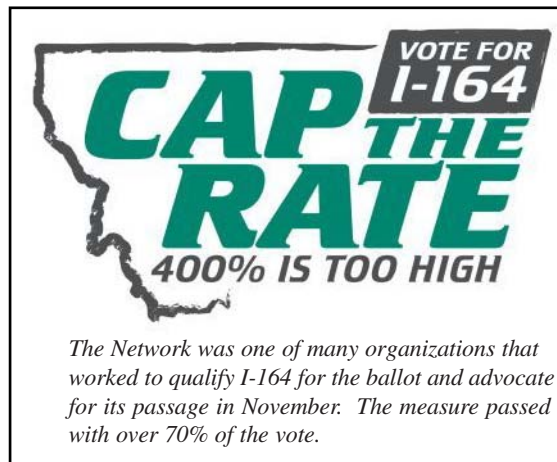
men used gun rights and anti-tax diatribes to not only recruit from the mainstream, but also influence the terms of the public debate.

By the end of the decade, Congressmen had brought the militia's "New World Order" conspiracies to the floor of the US House, and conservatives sounded alarmingly like Freemen in speeches advocating cuts in income taxes and abolishment of the IRS. This dynamic, which we call "Margins to the Mainstream," continues to this day.

continues to this day.

November's General Election found many new radical right-wing activists elected to the Montana Legislature. Many come directly from the Tea Party Movement and are ready to take their best shot at implementing a full slate of far-right ideology. These freshmen legislators also will find help from some incumbents from the 2009 Montana Legislature, where more anti-government "patriot" bills were introduced than in any session since 1995. The Network will be there shining the light of public scrutiny on their agenda and working to hold them accountable.

As this newsletter goes to press, the Network is working on the latest installment of its "Margins to the Mainstream" reporting. By early January, it should be finished, available on our website, and covered by the press. Make sure to keep an eye out for it! □



RIGHT WING ROUNDUP: THE RETURN OF FREEMEN AND “SOVEREIGNS”

Montana Freeman Leader Sentenced for Retaliation

A founder of the Montana Freeman, Daniel Petersen, has received another 7.5 years in prison for continuing to file phony liens against federal judges from his prison cell in Minnesota. In April 2010, Petersen became the first person ever to be sentenced under a federal law passed in 2008 making the retaliation against a government official through filing property liens a felony.

U.S. District Judge John C. Coughenour was one of the three judges targeted by Petersen's most recent paper terrorism. Coughenour was the judge who presided over the Montana Freeman cases in the 1990s and sentenced Petersen to 15 years in federal prison for bank fraud and armed robbery.

During the 1990s, Petersen, along with his anti-government cohort Leroy Schweitzer, ran the Montana Freeman out of a foreclosed ranch in Garfield County they called “Justus Township.” Claiming the US government to be illegitimate, they created their own laws and courts and began conducting trainings on how to write bogus financial documents.

Petersen and Schweitzer trained around 800 people from 30 different states before they were arrested in March 1996 for issuing a slew of phony checks and property liens targeting anyone they believed to have violated their “individual sovereignty.” Their arrest sparked an 81-day standoff between the Montana Freeman

and federal agents which ultimately ended with the Freeman surrendering and many of them going to jail.

While serving his 15-year sentence, Petersen concocted a plan to retaliate and obtain a fortune for himself. Initially, he wrote to then-Secretary of State Madeleine Albright claiming he had been illegally detained. Because of this, he believed he was entitled to \$100 trillion plus \$1 billion interest per day.

When she did not respond, he created a \$100 trillion “judgment” from Justus Township which he then used to start filing liens against the three judges' properties. Petersen then issued bounties for the arrest of the judges and additionally created a fake company for which he started selling “stock” to other inmates. He told them they would be able to capitalize on their investment when he received his \$100 trillion from the government.

National “Sovereign Squatting” Trend Arrives in Montana

In 2010, “sovereign citizens” across the country have taken on a new tactic in protesting government authority and asserting their desire to function above the law. Some anti-government “patriots” are squat-

ting in foreclosed homes and calling the action “house adoptions.”

The actuality is that they are attempting to subvert the law through “paper terrorism” tactics resurrected from the freemen movement of the 1990s. In two separate instances, individuals have attempted to steal properties in Montana with the justification that they are “sovereign.”

Last summer in Polson, a local realtor found that the locks had been changed and “For Sale” signs had

been removed from a \$300,000 foreclosed house he was selling. He then found that strange paperwork had been filed at the Clerk and Recorder's Office transferring the title of the property to a drifter named Brent Arthur Wilson. Wilson said the action was au-

thorized by “the Creator, Yaweh,” and the location of the property was listed as “the third planet from the sun.”

By the time law enforcement obtained a felony arrest warrant for Wilson, he had left town. He was eventually picked up in California and brought back to Montana for a trial where he was less than cooperative.

Wilson, representing himself, pleaded “not guilty” to three felonies and two misdemeanors. During a court hearing, he said, “For the (*Squatters, continued on page 13*)



Brent Arthur Wilson

photo from Missoulian

(Squatters, from page 12)

record, on the record, let the record show I have no constitutional rights, I want no constitutional rights, I claim no constitutional rights,” and then threatened that he would take action against any lawyer who tried to speak for him.

After a brief hiatus where Wilson was evaluated at the State Mental Hospital, he was deemed competent to stand trial. District Court Judge Kim Christopher sentenced Wilson to 20 years in Montana State Prison with 10 years suspended.

More recently, Jackiya Dionea Ford of California was arrested and charged in April for squatting in a Lolo home she didn't own. After viewing the home as a prospective buyer, Ford sent papers to the builder informing him of a lawsuit, and that she was now the owner of the house and all of the property within a 20 mile radius. Ford also told him she would drop the suit if he paid her \$900,000 in silver and gold.

Similar to Wilson's antics, Ford also changed all the locks on the home and then posted notices on the doors claiming that it had been given to her by “our Lord and Savior Yahushua.” When law enforcement arrested Ford, she tried to tell them that they had no authority over her, as she is a sovereign citizen of the “Republic of America.”

In November, Ford received a deferred probationary sentence after pleading no contest to felony burglary in Missoula County District Court. This means that, as long as Ford doesn't violate any of the conditions of the sentence, the conviction could be erased from her record.

Nick Murnion, the former Garfield County Attorney who prosecuted the Montana Freemen in the

1990s, compared Wilson with the Freemen. He told the *Missoulian* that “none of them believe the state has any authority over them - they claim they aren't citizens and the courts have no jurisdiction. It gets kind of bizarre.”

Sovereign Church of Christ Relocates to Emigrant

When Love Thomas Wright Cooper of Emigrant was pulled over in early March for speeding, the attending officer noticed the license plate was homemade and marked “pontiff.” Cooper could not provide the officer with insurance or registration for the vehicle and presented a “Sovereign Church of Christ” (SCC) identification card instead of a driver's license.

He told the officer the law does not apply to him as a member of the SCC. After informing the officer that he didn't have any firearms, Cooper was found to be hiding a loaded gun holstered under his jacket and 10 grams of marijuana. As it turns out, Cooper was convicted of felony assault in Virginia in 2000 and is prohibited from possessing a firearm.

For Cooper's March hearing in Park County, his wife and SCC pastor, Charisse Randolph, encouraged members to show up carrying a noose. One person actually did. Randolph, referring to the court officials, said, “(The nooses were) symbolic, that you are under rules of law, which clearly state that the penalty for treason is hung by the neck until dead.”

Cooper, wholly uncooperative in the courtroom, was charged in Park County for felony theft of a vehicle, felony possession of marijuana, and several misdemeanors, such as car-



photo from Billings Gazette

Love Thomas Wright Cooper

rying a concealed weapon, obstructing a peace officer and various traffic violations. Following the hearing, authorities transferred Cooper to Yellowstone County jail as his behavior became too disruptive in Livingston's small and overcrowded facility.

At the end of July, a US District Court judge in Billings agreed to let Cooper represent himself on the federal charges of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Throughout the hearing, Cooper continually denied the court's jurisdiction and obstructed the process, to which the judge insisted that any more disruptive behavior from him would result in his watching the proceedings from a holding cell.

Cooper remains in custody and still faces state felony and misdemeanor charges in Park County.

The SCC, which relocated to the Wellspring Institute in Emigrant, MT, in October 2009, was originally created by Cooper in New York in 2008. SCC's website suggests the use of “sovereign citizen” tactics, stating that it provides a “flagship service being that of SCC Citizenship, whereby we offer identification, license plates and aid in extricating *(Squatters, continued on page 15)*

(Baldwin, from page 16)

main publication. He has claimed that the “leaders of the Old Confederacy” were not racist.

Over the past few years, Ravalli County’s Celebrating Conservatism has brought Baldwin to Montana on multiple occasions (for more on Celebrating Conservatism, see the December 2009 and April 2010 editions of *Network News*). At Celebrating Conservatism’s poorly attended Liberty Convention in May 2010, Baldwin shared the stage with: Red Beckman, an anti-Semitic tax protester; Richard Mack, former Arizona sheriff and militia hero; and Schaeffer Cox, a volatile young militia activist from Alaska.

At the Convention, Baldwin urged attendees to elect leaders who will push the idea of state sovereignty. Baldwin shared with the audience that he fantasizes about Montanans drawing the line in the sand and telling the Federal Government, “Montana will live free. Montana will bow to the knee of Caesar no more!”

At the Convention, attendees and emcee Rick Jore, who was elected to one term in the Montana House of Representative on the Constitution Party of Montana ticket, urged Baldwin to move to the area. Baldwin responded that he would pray about it. Jore said he wanted to form a committee to elect Baldwin as Governor of Montana and asked any interested people to come talk to him.

Jore’s warm overtures toward Baldwin are a stark contrast to how Baldwin was treated during the 2008 election cycle. The national Constitution Party nominated Baldwin as its presidential candidate. However, the Constitution Party of Montana, of which Jore was the chairman, shunned Baldwin as their presidential candidate on the Montana ballot. Instead, the Montana party listed US Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX), who had failed to win the nomination of the national Republican Party, as its



Although Rick Jore (left), as chairman of the Constitution Party of Montana, did not choose Chuck Baldwin to be the party’s presidential candidate in 2008, he actively recruited Baldwin to move to Montana.

presidential candidate. The move didn’t really impact results—Baldwin received 0.15% of the national vote and Paul garnered approximately 2% in Montana.

In late October 2010, Baldwin and his family finished their move to Montana and settled in Kila. He plans to start a new ministry, The Liberty Fellowship, and continue streaming his ideology online. He has also stated that he hasn’t ruled out “a run for State office.” Already this last November, his son, Tim, who is an attorney, presented on the topics of state sovereignty and nationalism versus federalism in both Kalispell and Ronan. The events were sponsored by local “patriot” groups, the Freedom Action Rally and Citizens Acting for Liberty.

Baldwin’s website has a page dedicated to his family’s move to Montana. It links to sites like the “Militant Libertarian,” which boasts the motto “give me liberty or eat lead!” The article Baldwin links to at that particular site suggests that the government is out to get Baldwin. It references the 1992 standoff between

white supremacist Randy Weaver and federal agents at Ruby Ridge, ID, asking, “Will the Grand Wizard Obamanator send the sons and daughters of the Ruby Ridge Assassination Team after

Chuckie?”

Baldwin’s relocation to Montana even has Kalispell-based white supremacist April Gaede excited. Gaede has started a Pioneer Little Europe (PLE) in Kalispell with the intent of getting more white supremacists to Montana. She has posted on a notorious white supremacist forum that one of her goals is to start reaching out to people that aren’t a part of the PLE, such as “white patriots,” to hopefully draw them into the fold. She has commented that Baldwin moving to Montana is a reason why her racist cohorts across the country should consider moving here too.

Similarly, Baldwin believes his move to Montana is part of a “FREEDOM RUSH” whereby people wanting to escape the “tyrannical tentacles of Washington D.C.” will move to western states. He claims other “Christian patriots” have already followed him to Montana and he hopes that is just the beginning. □

(*Squatters*, from page 13)

you from all the contracts that the US Gov't [sic] has tricked you into by deception."

As African-Americans, Cooper's and Ford's involvement in the "sovereign citizen" movement is indeed strange. The movement originated with the white supremacist Posse Comitatus. However, there are black separatist groups in the US who do espouse "sovereign citizen" ideology, but it is a rare occurrence in Montana.

Cooper's situation has been picked up by anti-government "patriots" across the country. Eric "Spike" Kiesche of Tennessee, founder of The Order of Constitution Defenders, posted on his website a link claiming they had information about "abuse of unalienable rights" in Livingston, MT. The site expressed outrage at Cooper's "kidnapping" and posted a pseudo-legal document written by Cooper.

Kiesche was recently invited by the Big Sky Tea

Party Association of Helena to speak at the group's March 2010 Second Amendment rally on the Capitol steps. The event was also promoted by the Montana Oath Keepers.

In a Knoxville publication, Kiesche said he used to be looked down on, but he has been warmly welcomed into the Tea Party movement. He stated Tea Parties aren't to the point of armed resistance yet, but that they are moving in that direction. On his group's website, Kiesche sells a "Freedom Package" for \$250 which describes techniques for "sovereign citizens" on how to evade income taxes, "rid yourself of all licenses (government issued permission slips)...."

The Network finds it alarming that a new generation of "sovereign citizens" are relocating to Montana. It's also concerning that Tea Party groups and the Oath Keepers are promoting people like Kiesche who advocate for and defend anti-government violent felons, like Cooper, while they continue to break the law. □



photo from Constitution Defenders website

Eric Kiesche

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PASTOR MOVES TO MONTANA TO BATTLE “NEW WORLD ORDER”

After 35 years as the pastor of Crossroad Baptist Church in Pensacola, FL, Chuck Baldwin is transplanting his entire family of 17 people to the Flathead Valley. He says it's because God told him to make the move.

Baldwin unsuccessfully ran for president on the 2008 ticket of the Constitution Party, which combines many tenets of the anti-government “patriot” movement with an extreme version of Christian fundamentalism. In writing about his decision to move to Montana, he infused his “patriot” and Christian beliefs with apocalyptic rhetoric.

Based on his alleged conversations with God, Baldwin prophesizes that “America is headed for an almost certain cataclysm,” which he says, “will most certainly include a fight between Big-Government globalists and freedom-loving, independent-minded patriots.” Baldwin explains that this “battle” will play out in the mountain states, including Montana, and that he will find allies in his new home.



Chuck Baldwin

“The Mountain States just might become The Alamo of the twenty-first century, with, hopefully, much better results,” he said. “I would rather die fighting for freedom with liberty-loving patriots by my side than be shuttled off to some FEMA camp.” Baldwin claims that Montana “will be the tip of the spear in the freedom fight.”

Baldwin left the Republican Party in 2004, just in time to get

nominated as vice president on the Constitution Party's ticket that year. He claimed there were no longer differences between Republicans and Democrats. He complained that neither major party had any “intention of outlawing abortion-on-demand” and both were committed to “granting legitimacy to homosexuality.” Baldwin said he joined the Constitution Party, because it shared his “pro-life, pro-liberty, and pro-constitution convictions.”

During the 1990s, Baldwin used his radio show on the Christian Patriot Network to promote the militia movement.

He has also been involved with white supremacist neo-Confederate groups. The Council of Conservative Citizens (categorized as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center) is the modern-day incarnation of the White Citizens' Council that supported segregation and opposed the Civil Rights Movement during the 1960s. Baldwin has been a contributing writer to the group's (*Baldwin, continued on page 14*)

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BITTERROOT GROUP PROMOTES MORE “PATRIOTS”

One of Montana’s most active “patriot” groups held events this fall featuring well-known leaders of the anti-government movement.

In September, Hamilton’s Celebrating Conservatism hosted two gun rights activists with substantial “patriot” ties—Larry Pratt of Gun Owners of America and Gary Marbut of the Montana Shooting Sports Association. In November, the group sponsored a presentation by Stewart Rhodes, founder of The Oath Keepers.

These events continued Celebrating Conservatism’s tradition of featuring noteworthy leaders of the “patriot” movement at its monthly meetings (for more, see the August 2010 and December 2009 editions of *Network News*).

Pratt: A Godfather of Militias

Larry Pratt’s organization, Gun Owners of America, is comprised of people who think the National Rifle Association is too moderate on gun issues. The group is based out of Virginia, where Pratt was once a member of the Virginia House of Delegates. Much like the laundry list of 1990’s militia movement heroes that Celebrating Conservatism has featured over the past two years, Pratt has an extensive history with the radical right wing.

Pratt was the co-chair of Pat Buchanan’s presidential campaign in 1996 but was forced to resign because of his ties to extremist groups. The resignation came when it became public that Pratt spoke at a 1992 meeting of neo-Nazis, Christian Identity leaders, and other white supremacists. The event followed the standoff at Ruby Ridge, ID, between Randy Weaver and federal law enforcement. This meeting was a seminal moment in the creation of the 1990’s militia movement.

The three-day event in Estes Park, CO, was organized and sponsored by Christian Identity Pastor Pete Peters. Christian Identity is based on racist interpretation of the Bible that teaches white people are God’s chosen people, Jewish people are the literal children of Satan, and people of color are sub-human “mud people.”

In addition to Pratt, other speakers included Aryan Nations’ Richard Butler and Ku Klux Klan leader Louis Beam. The meeting was attended by Militia of Montana

founder John Trochmann and Chris Temple, a Montana-based correspondent for *The Jubilee*, a Christian Identity publication.

When Pratt began taking heat during the Buchanan campaign for his role at Estes Park, well-known tax protestor and anti-Semite Red Beckman came to his defense. Beckman, who also spoke at Estes Park, defended Pratt’s participation. He said, “What’s being said about Larry Pratt is a bunch of bull. I’ve been laughing throughout this whole thing.” Celebrating Conservatism has also featured Beckman at multiple events.

Pratt has also been a contributing editor to a newsletter published by the United Sovereigns of America, an Oklahoma-based group that promoted “common law courts” like those established by the Montana Freemen. In addition, Pratt has been featured in publications by the Montana-based Fully Informed Jury Association (FIJA) for his efforts to pass its legislative proposals in Texas.

FIJA has been part of the “patriot” movement for years. The group claims that a jury has the right to “judge both the law and the evidence in the case before it,” a tactic known as jury nullification. In essence, FIJA encourages juries to ignore laws they don’t like and set defendants free regardless of evidence to the contrary. Red Beckman has been called the “Grandfather of FIJA.”

In addition to Gun Owners of America, Pratt has founded a variety of organizations: English First, US Border Control, and the Committee to Protect the Family. English First was formed in 1986 and is now part of the English-only movement that has been popularized by the anti-immigrant and white supremacists movements. In the 1980s and 1990s, Pratt’s Committee to Protect the Family raised \$150,000 for the anti-choice group Operation Rescue.

September Event: Guns, Guns, and More Guns

The Celebrating Conservatism event in September included tables for FIJA, Oath Keepers, and Liber Books. Liber Books was selling a copy of Adolph Hitler’s *Mein* (Pratt, continued on back)



Larry Pratt
Gun Owners of America

(Pratt, continued from front)

Kampf. Like most Celebrating Conservatism events, nearly everyone was armed with a gun. Mona Docteur, Celebrating Conservatism's leader, made multiple pitches for gun kits available from Dillon, MT's own KT Ordnance.

Richard Celata, founder of the business, asked the crowd, "How many of you like having the government know what firearms you have? Well, these firearms do not have serial numbers on it, nobody knows you've bought it but you and I. What you do is you build it yourself. Plus, nobody knows you have it."

Gary Marbut then presented on a piece of the Montana Shooting Sports Association's 2011 legislative agenda that is euphemistically called the "Sheriff's First" bill. It would make it a crime in Montana for a federal officer to arrest, search or seize without advance written permission from the local county sheriff.

The idea is a hallmark of the radical right that harkens back to ideas of the racist and violent Posse Comitatus. The Posse, a white supremacist group, viewed the sheriff as the highest legitimate law officer in the land. It believed citizens were not subject to federal authorities. For the Posse, it was up to the sheriff to use force to prevent any perceived encroachment by federal institutions, especially when it came to income tax and firearm regulations.

At the September event, Larry Pratt spoke primarily about his current work leading Gun Owners of America. However, he also promoted a common "patriot" conspiracy theory that moves from a fear of gun confiscation to total world takeover by a supposed New World Order. He told attendees, "We are in a war. It is a culture war....We are facing socialism, pure and simple....They want our guns, of course — that's what every socialist regime has ever wanted to do. They want our kids, they want our money, they want our land."

Pratt and Marbut are a key piece of the "Margins to the Mainstream" dynamic that moves extremist ideas into mainstream political debate.

The Network's Travis McAdam comments, "Marbut is very firmly in the 'patriot' camp. But because of the dynamics around Second Amendment issues in Montana politics, he has been able to portray himself, and is looked at by legislators, as a gun-rights policy expert

with political clout. He is treated both with respect and fear. Even Democrats falsely believe that they can't get elected without pandering to Marbut."

November Event: The Founder of Oath Keepers

In November, Stewart Rhodes, founder of the Oath Keepers, was the featured speaker for Celebrating Conservatism. Oath Keepers wants law enforcement officers and military personnel to sign onto their oath, which encapsulates many of the ideas promoted by the "patriot" movement's one-world government conspiracy theories.

Since its formation in 2009, anti-government "patriots" have flocked to Oath Keepers, and many started posting statements on organizational websites advocating warfare. Rhodes finally had to request they stop. He said such discussion might make active duty personnel "wary of participating" in Oath Keepers. He didn't oppose such talk, but he asked that it be discussed somewhere else. Rhodes has commented he "actively support[s] the revitalization of the state militias." However, he has said he wants to keep that activity away from Oath Keepers.

For more on the group, see the Network's briefing paper at http://mhrn.org/factsheets_advisories.html.

In Hamilton, Rhodes told attendees that there are natural rights that are not enumerated in the Bill of Rights and in the US Constitution. He said the most important founding document is actually the Declaration of Independence. He advised the audience that they didn't need a piece of paper to have a right to bear arms and, "If you allow yourself to be disarmed, you will have no life nor liberty after that."

He told the audience that Oath Keepers is, "trying to buy you time...by causing strategic uncertainty in the minds of the domestic enemies of our Republic. I want them to lay awake at night and wonder and worry whether or not their orders will be followed, about how many are in the military or police are in like minds with us."

Rhodes recently moved back to Montana. From 2005-2007, he practiced law at the O'Neill Law Office in Polson. He had been living in Nevada. □



Stewart Rhodes
The Oath Keepers