

# OPINION

## CASPER Star Tribune

Natrona Tribune: Est. in 1891; The Casper Daily Tribune: Est. Oct. 9, 1916, by J.E. Hanway;  
The Casper Star: Est. in 1949 | A Lee Enterprises newspaper  
170 Star Lane, Casper, WY 82604  
letters@trib.com | 307-266-0500 ext. 0

**MICHELLE ROBINSON** President  
**DALE BOHREN** Publisher Emeritus  
**JOSHUA WOLFSON** Editor  
**SALLY ANN SHURMUR** Community News Editor

### COMMUNITY BOARD MEMBERS:

Steve Degenfelder  
Dave Freudenthal  
Jamie Purcell

### STAR-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL

## When it comes to inclusivity, Wyoming must do better

### STAR-TRIBUNE EDITORIAL BOARD

In Wyoming, we're proud to tout our state's live and let live attitude. We see our state as the kind of place where people can live how they want as long as they offer the same courtesy to others. We call ourselves the Equality State, and we celebrate our important role in the women's suffrage movement.

But the reality is, we continue to witness a parade of concerning incidents that suggest that we as a state are less tolerant than we'd like to think. And that failure to create a welcoming and open environment has implications that extend into our community, our economy and our future success as a state.

Consider the appointment late last year of Wyoming's first Black sheriff, Albany County's Aaron Appelhans. The new sheriff was appointed after an extended community conversation about law enforcement in Albany County. But when he took office, his introduction to the state didn't begin with a discussion of policy. Rather, Appelhans' start was marred by a racist tweet by state Rep. Cyrus Western. Western responded to an article on Appelhans' appointment by tweeting a GIF from the film "Blazing Saddles," which depicts a Black sheriff asking, "Where the white women at?"

Unfortunately, Western wasn't alone among state leaders who've set the wrong example of late. A few months earlier, Sen. Jim Anderson told the chairwoman of the Wyoming Women's Council that he'd rather look at her than listen to her presentation to a legislative committee. Afterward, Anderson showed little understanding of why his comment was so inappropriate.

Last fall, we also heard from former state lawmaker Marti Halverson, who argued it wasn't a problem that Wyoming women are so underrepresented in the Legislature. Why? Because men have wives and mothers and therefore understand women's issues as well as actual women.

Finally, Park County this fall became the site of an extended debate about tolerance and inclusivity after a same-sex couple were told they were not welcome there. That homophobic incident occurred as the county welcomes an influx of new residents seeking a slower paced, more rural life. Thankfully, many in the community stood up against this sort of hatred. But there were others who argued in its favor.

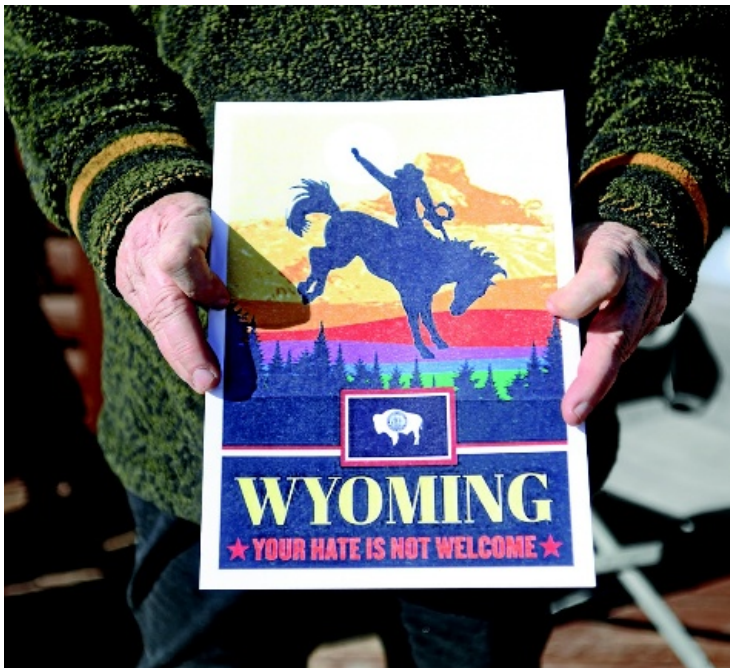
Some are tempted to dismiss these as isolated incidents or political correctness run amok. But that reasoning ignores the true damage these comments can cause, not only to individuals, but to all of us. Put simply, they hurt Wyoming.

The comments, taken together, send a painful message to people of color, the LGBTQ community and working women: We don't value you here. And that message has major implications.

At the most basic level, we should want all people to feel that they are welcome in Wyoming, whether they are the great granddaughter of a homesteader or a same-sex couple looking to find their own piece of quiet prairie. And it's harder for people to realize their full potential when they must strive against the headwinds of sexism, racism and homophobia.

Nor do we want to turn away people who might want to relocate here, especially at a time when our economy desperately needs talented, entrepreneurial workers. How many young engineers are we missing out on because of incidents like these? How many of our young people are fleeing the state for more tolerant places?

We can all agree that we want Wyoming to grow and thrive. To accomplish that, we need to do our part to ensure Wyoming is a place all people can call home. We need to call out intolerance. We need to ask our leaders to do better. And we also need to do better ourselves. Only then will we truly deserve to be called the Equality State.



CAYLA NIMMO, STAR-TRIBUNE

Colin Monahan holds a poster that was created by a friend after Monahan and her wife were confronted at their Wapiti home by a small group who allegedly told the same-sex couple they were not welcome in their community.



## The rule of law matters

As lawyers, retired judges, and legal educators of all political parties, we share the shock felt by most Americans over the events of Jan. 6, in Washington, D.C. In the days, months, and years ahead the underlying causes will be debated, and accountability will be assigned. We all have our own opinions on that subject, and they vary, but we will refrain from adding them here. Instead, at this dangerous moment, we think it is important to keep in mind that, while the foundations of our democracy have been shaken, they remain strong. And for that, we are indebted to the courage of countless individuals, from both political parties, who when tested, stood up to do their Constitutional duties.

Thousands of state election officials, placing themselves in harm's way, worked tirelessly under the intense gaze of partisan poll watchers and video audiences, in a transparent effort designed to assure all of us that "all legal votes would be counted." Votes were cast and counted, and in hotly contested states, recounted (and in Georgia manually counted again) or subjected to various post-election challenges allowed under different state laws. After all of that, state election officials in contested states, mostly Republicans, publicly affirmed that no meaningful anomalies were found, conclusions that subjected them to violent criticism and threats. Rather than retreating, they stood their ground, in defense of their own state laws and in adherence to their Constitutional duties.

Ultimately, the integrity of the election was challenged in every swing state in over sixty lawsuits. Judges and their support staffs, Republicans and Democrats alike, following their oaths, rose to the challenge by issuing dozens-upon-dozens of reasoned written decisions, addressing all claimed irregularities, including fraud, raised in multiple state and federal courts. No court found any material evidence of fraud or showing of illegality that would change the results. Even the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed appeals and unanimously found no reason to interfere with any state's voting procedure or result.

During all of these post-election efforts questioning the integrity of the election process, on Nov. 20, Rep. Liz Cheney publicly stated:

"America is governed by the rule of law. The President and his lawyers have made claims of criminality and widespread fraud, which they allege could impact election results. If they have genuine evidence of this, they are obligated to present it

immediately in court and to the American people. I understand that the President has filed more than thirty separate lawsuits. If he is unsatisfied with the results in those lawsuits, then the appropriate avenue is to appeal. If the President cannot prove these claims or demonstrate that they would change the election result, he should fulfill his oath to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States by respecting the sanctity of our electoral process."

Rep. Cheney's challenge to the President, his supporters, and lawyers to produce evidence to support their claims was entirely correct. Her further challenge to him, and them, to support the sanctity of our electoral process was both proper and courageous.

Sadly, after all states had certified their elections and electoral college votes, and the litigation efforts had failed, the President and some Republicans in Congress began a campaign urging Congress to reject the electoral college votes of swing states which the President had lost—a campaign which, if successful, would have disenfranchised tens-of-millions of voters and put the nation into a full-blown Constitutional crisis. Rep. Cheney, putting aside considerations of party, promptly called out those actions for what they were: "unconstitutional" and "dangerous." The Congresswoman went to the effort of preparing a lengthy memorandum reviewing all of the litigation that had debunked the "allegations" of fraud and illegality to convince her Republican colleagues that the election was over and that they had a duty under the Constitution and federal law to uphold the right of all states, including Wyoming, to control and determine their own electoral college vote. In response to her actions, she was personally targeted by the President, who told the angry partisans he had summoned to Washington on January 6th: "The Liz Cheneys of the world...we have to get rid of them."

We are proud of Rep. Cheney's courage. In the face of calls to lawlessness from high places she adhered to her solemn oath to protect and defend the Constitution. Whatever political differences any may have with her, in connection with the election and the events of January 6th, all Wyomingites should applaud her understanding of her constitutional duties and her willingness to perform them, irrespective of the personal or political cost she might pay.

Our country has many challenges to face in the days ahead. We call upon all of our elected leaders, at the state and federal levels, to follow the example of

Rep. Cheney, and other responsible leaders from both parties, by recognizing the lawful results of the 2020 election. We ask that they recommit to the solemn oaths they swore to uphold and defend our Constitution. Living up to those oaths is the bedrock of the rule of law, the first principle of our democracy.

The events of Jan. 6 will be long remembered. May they never happen again.

Signers in alphabetical order:

John Araas, lawyer, Sheridan  
Kenneth Barbe, lawyer, Casper  
James Belcher, lawyer, Casper  
Kim Cannon, lawyer, Sheridan  
Richard Davis, lawyer, Past President Wyoming Bar Assn.,  
Sheridan  
Jeffrey Donnell, lawyer,  
Wyoming District Judge (Albany County), retired  
William Downes, United States District Judge, retired  
Dave Freudenthal, Wyoming Governor (2003-11), lawyer,  
Cheyenne  
Megan Overmann Goetz, lawyer, Laramie  
Michael Golden, Justice, Wyoming Supreme Court, retired  
Amberly Goodchild Baker, lawyer, Jackson  
Paul Hickey, lawyer, Past President Wyoming Bar Assn.,  
Cheyenne  
Rob Jarosh, lawyer, Past President Wyoming Bar Assn.,  
Cheyenne  
Dennis Kirven, lawyer, Buffalo  
Marilyn Kite, Justice, Wyoming Supreme Court, retired  
John Masterson, lawyer, Past President Wyoming Bar Assn.,  
Casper  
Matt Mead, Wyoming Governor (2011-2019), lawyer,  
Cheyenne  
Nick Murdock, lawyer, Casper  
Devon O'Connell, lawyer, Past President Wyoming Bar Assn.,  
Laramie  
Anna Reeves Olsen, lawyer,  
Casper  
Dave Park, Wyoming District Court Judge (Natrona County),  
retired  
Jerry Parkinson, former Dean,  
Wyoming College of Law  
William Schwartz & Cheryl Ranck Schwartz, lawyers, Jackson  
Leah Schwartz & Bradley Adams, lawyers, Jackson  
Ken Stebner, Wyoming District Judge (Carbon County), retired  
Mike Sullivan, Wyoming Governor (1987-95), lawyer,  
retired, Casper  
Wade Waldrip, Wyoming District Judge (Carbon County),  
retired  
Rhonda Woodard, lawyer,  
Cheyenne  
Gay Woodhouse, lawyer,  
former Wyoming Attorney General, Past President Wyoming Bar Assn., Cheyenne  
Norm Young, Wyoming District Judge (Fremont County),  
retired

### Letters to the editor

To submit a letter to the editor, go to trib.com/letters, email letters@trib.com or address the submission to the Casper Star-Tribune, Letters Editor, 170 Star Lane, Casper, Wyoming, 82604. Letters must be 350 words or fewer, cannot criticize a specific business and may be edited for clarity, taste and accuracy. Submissions must include the writer's name, hometown and phone number; the phone number will be used for verification purposes only. A writer is allowed to have two letters published each month.