

ELECTIONS

High Country News

For people who care about the West

PURPLE RAIN

How Donald Trump's
divisive campaign is
repainting the political map





Carmen Cornejo takes a selfie with Marcos Garcia Acosta and U.S. Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick during a “Latinos for Ann” event, to support her run for the U.S. Senate, at Luna Culture Lab in Phoenix in September. DAVID JOLKOVSKI

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Editor's note

Trump and the West

In the past, elections in the West have been fairly predictable. In urban areas and along the West Coast, folks tended to vote blue, for Democrats. In rural areas and in the Rocky Mountain interior, they leaned heavily red, for Republicans, especially in Montana, Idaho, Wyoming and Utah. Over the past decade, however, that pattern has started to change. An expanding Latino population in the Southwest and growing urban populations have turned states that were once solidly red to purple, or, as in Colorado, closer to blue.



But what about this year’s odd election? Donald Trump’s unlikely run for the presidency, with its bold appeals to anti-immigrant sentiment and to a disenfranchised, mainly white segment of America, has upset the political apple cart. Trump’s ridicule of Republican Party leaders, his calls for a wall on the U.S.-Mexico border and for a ban on Muslim immigration, and the vitriol and violence evident at his rallies raise major questions about our nation and our democracy. But how are they playing out in the West? Following Trump’s official nomination as the Republican Party’s candidate, we set out to learn more.

In Arizona, our D.C. correspondent, Elizabeth Shogren, found Democrats hopeful that a surge in Latino voter turnout could upset the Republicans’ long-held dominance of the state, where Latinos usually vote in numbers that are far from representative of their population. But, as Shogren reports in this issue’s cover story, anger over Trump’s candidacy and over the treatment of Latinos by the controversial sheriff of Maricopa County, Joe Arpaio, a Trump champion, could change that.

Trump’s campaign could also have major ramifications in Nevada, where his anti-immigration rhetoric is helping get-out-the-vote efforts for many groups: Not only are more people registering, but some are becoming citizens to do so. The Trump run has also created a painful conflict among many Mormon voters in deeply red Utah. As correspondent Sarah Tory writes, Utah voters are finding themselves caught between their politics and their ethical beliefs.

This election cycle has been intense, and its intensity threatens to deeply divide our region, our states, and even our families. We should not let this happen. We should strive for discourse over division. The presidential race is about more than Donald Trump and his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton: It is a referendum on where we want to go as a nation. I believe that when the dust has settled and history is being written, the Trump run will signify a major shift in the politics of the West and the nation as a whole. I just hope the shift is toward something ethical, inclusive and sane — whether it’s red, blue or purple.

—Brian Calvert, managing editor

On the cover
Original illustration
by Sidney Davidson.



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An immigrant detainee holds his daughter during a family visit at the Adelanto Detention Facility, managed by GEO Group, a private company in Adelanto, California. JOHN MOORE/GETTY IMAGES

Detention for profit

There are signs the federal government may be moving away from its reliance on private incarceration: In mid-August, the Justice Department announced it would phase out its contracts with private prisons, and the Department of Homeland Security is studying whether to discontinue its use of private prisons to hold immigrant detainees. But in the West, much of the private immigration detention apparatus could remain intact. The new rules are likely to apply only to contracts between the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency and private prison companies, not the agreements with local governments. And there's incentive for counties to keep those contracts intact: In southern New Mexico's Doña Ana County, which agreed to house detainees on behalf of the federal government, 270 of the 846 beds in the local jail are designated for immigrants. In exchange, the county receives \$62 per day, or a little over \$6 million per year if all the beds are used. For the DHS decision to have impact, activists say, it would also have to be coupled with broader policy changes that reduce the number of people sent to jail for immigration offenses. SARAH TORY
MORE: hcn.ws/private-prison

Trending

Pipeline protest spreads Westwide

Protests over the Dakota Access Pipeline began in April with a few members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, who are concerned that the 1,700-mile pipeline slated to cross the Missouri River could contaminate their drinking water and harm sacred sites. But as the protests have spread, the motivations have also become more diverse, rallying environmentalists fighting fossil fuels and communities across the West around the causes of tribal sovereignty and fighting corporate greed. In September, the Obama administration paused construction of the pipeline pending review. A fast resolution is unlikely. AMY SISK AND LEIGH PATTERSON/INSIDE ENERGY

Groundwater without borders

An unknown number of aquifers dot the border along the U.S. and Mexico, groundwater both sides use for agriculture, irrigation and cities. Yet neither country knows exactly how those aquifers are managed — or how much border communities need them. For a decade, researchers have attempted to study transboundary aquifers, but the effort stalled from lack of information and funding. This year, studies are wrapping up on two major water systems: the San Pedro and Santa Cruz aquifers along the Arizona-Sonora border. The research affords a more unified picture of the groundwater systems, the first step toward collaborative management of the shared aquifers. LYNDESEY GILPIN MORE: hcn.ws/border-water



The Upper Santa Cruz and Upper San Pedro water basins, important to both the U.S. and Mexico.

UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

SMALL TOWNS, BIG CHANGE

6

Percent of American farmers who are younger than 35. The National Young Farmers Coalition is pushing Congress and state legislatures, including New Mexico's, to forgive farmers' student loans to entice more young graduates to work in agriculture, where a new farm might only make \$2,000 a year. LYNDESEY GILPIN
MORE: hcn.ws/young-farmer



Ellaree Rockey, 10, steps down from the tractor she just drove across her family's potato farm, where an innovative use of cover crops has decreased need for irrigating and increased the bottom line.

LEAH TODD/SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM NETWORK

Save Our Soil

In southern Colorado, a small potato farm is using a blend of 16 different vegetables, legumes and grasses as cover crops to create nutrient-rich soil and use about two-thirds less water. The practice lessened the effects of a multi-year drought that shrank the region's water table and dried up wells. More farmers there are adopting the practice, and it's a model that, according to researchers, could work for bigger operations as well. LEAH TODD
MORE: hcn.ws/revive-soil

\$576

Tax bill for one New Mexico property when it was classified as agricultural land

\$3,000

Amount that same property was taxed once it lost its ag designation

In New Mexico, some farmers are struggling to hold onto fields that they've left idle amid a severe drought a decade ago. State tax law makes idling land an expensive proposition: Active agricultural lands get a tax subsidy, but now the state is cracking down on farms that have sat fallow for many years. The result for many landowners has been a sudden spike in taxes, sometimes as much as 143-fold. In 2015, a report concluded that offering tax incentives for preserving open space — not just active farms — could lead to more sustainable agriculture and prevent the kind of tax crisis facing struggling New Mexican farmers. J.R. LOGAN/THE TAOS NEWS
MORE: hcn.ws/NMfarmers

You say

SUZANNE WALTHER: "Halted. For now. It is definitely not over for good. They need more and continued support from all of us."

BRUCE BERRYHILL: "North Dakota didn't allow the pipeline to cross the river upstream from the capital because it might leak and pollute their drinking water. But it's fine if it pollutes the Gulf of Mexico."

MARK A. YORK: "Water is a false cause. This is a circus and it's all about the show."

MORE: hcn.ws/DAPSpreads and Facebook.com/highcountrynews

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RESISTANCE IS NOT FUTILE

It was to our dismay that the USGS Director of the Southwest Climate Science Center put forward an argument to abandon large swaths of the Sonoran Desert to invasive species ("A conversation with Stephen Jackson," *HCN*, 9/5/16). Climate change is certainly going to reorganize Sonoran Desert ecosystems, but the paleo-environmental record has shown that this desert has been highly resilient to past changes. Unsuccessful attempts to remove invasive species are not an exercise in futility. While land managers, ecologists and volunteers have not yet identified an effective method to eradicate buffelgrass, it doesn't preclude the possibility that we will succeed. In the early 2000s, ecologists considered tamarisk "naturalized." However, today we see significant reductions in tamarisk related to the 2007 tamarisk beetle release. Similarly, 30 years of research has identified a seed pathogen that gives us hope for controlling cheatgrass. Conservation successes encourage a redoubling of efforts to look for effective methods to reduce anthropogenic threats to native ecosystems. When leaders of the scientific community give up, it encourages others to do the same. We need to continue to fight for desert ecosystems, resisting the temptation to succumb to the pessimism that we cannot limit or eradicate invasive taxa. Our energy should be focused on providing an environment that allows native species to adjust to changing climatic conditions naturally through continued efforts to disadvantage invasive species.

Thomas Minckley
Laramie, Wyoming
Andrea Brunelle
Salt Lake City, Utah

DON'T EMBRACE INVASIVES

Stephen Jackson's common-sense perspective — that we can't do everything — matches the daily decision-making of land managers who determine where to invest their limited resources to best stop the spread of invasives (*HCN*, 9/5/16). Land managers are very aware of their limitations, and of the dynamic nature of the places they manage. The perception that they aspire to return lands to some historic state seems far removed from my experience across California. Land managers are working to protect sensitive species, key habitats, ecosystem processes and climate refugia.



PETER OMMUNDSEN

demonstrating that in most rural communities, the primary reason for the demise of health services, including hospitals, was the failure of communities to meet their residents' needs and expectations. Our research at the University of Washington Medical School, Department of Family Medicine, documented massive outflows of patients to larger communities for hospital and other services, even services available locally. Unacceptable quality of care, across a wide spectrum of experiences, drove residents elsewhere, but community health-care leaders typically either denied this or failed to come to grips with the problem. Other issues are common: chronic conflict among clinicians, inadequate engagement

by community leaders in the downward spiral of services, and continued externalizing of the blame. Our research documented that the primary dynamic in the deterioration of rural health services was factors within our communities, even as the external forces of course aggravated the situation. But communities that stepped up and took control, engaged in honest and comprehensive analysis, and accepted responsibility for the internal decay, showed again and again that an appropriate range of quality health services could be sustained.

As Jackson implies when talking about buffelgrass in the Sonoran Desert, we can acknowledge our inability to address all invasive species without embracing them as an acceptable part of the new order. The concept of "novel ecosystems" is more useful as an area of scientific study than it is on the ground, where managers are already coping with changes beyond their control. In the political and public perception realms, we need to take care that the concept does not weaken support for effective action aimed at limiting ecosystem degradation. Though there are certainly limits to what can be done, we won't truly find those limits until we make the prevention and management of invasive species a top priority and allocate resources accordingly.

Doug Johnson
Executive director
California Invasive Plant Council
Berkeley, California

Bruce Amundson
Shoreline, Washington

CONSIDER THE CONNECTIONS

Kudos to Rita Clagett for sharing her anguish over what to do about the prairie dog colony on her property ("Slaughter of the Innocents," *HCN*, 9/5/16). Taking us through the steps that led to her "final solution" raised ethical questions we all might well ponder. But in calling her earlier defense of the colony an error of "sticking by my emotional guns," she frames the issue as bleeding hearts versus pragmatists. Given that Clagett is a Buddhist, she might have considered the cornerstone Buddhist teaching that everything depends on everything else. There's nothing particularly emotional about this truth. Darwin essentially came to the same conclusion 2,500 years later. Every creature has a role to play in the web of life that sustains us. If we don't see how a so-called varmint fits in, we're not looking hard enough.

Merrill Collett
Tucson, Arizona

STOPPING THE DOWNWARD SPIRAL

While the factors Elizabeth Zach cites — low reimbursement by public insurers, reduced inpatient services, hospital mergers and others — have historically impacted the ability of rural communities to sustain viable health services, this litany of forces reflects incomplete knowledge of research dating back 30 years ("A Rural Health Care Checkup: Lessons from the Central Valley," *HCN*, 9/5/16). For decades, rural health professionals and leaders relentlessly pointed the finger at forces external to their communities that threatened hospitals and other services, including small populations and weak economies. Then a solid body of research emerged

High
Country
News



High Country News is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) independent media organization that covers the issues that define the American West. Its mission is to inform and inspire people to act on behalf of the region's diverse natural and human communities.

(ISSN/0191/5657) is published bi-weekly, 22 times a year, by High Country News, 119 Grand Ave., Paonia, CO 81428. Periodicals, postage paid at Paonia, CO, and other post offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to High Country News, Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428. All rights to publication of articles in this issue are reserved. See hcn.org for submission guidelines. Subscriptions to *HCN* are \$37 a year, \$47 for institutions: 800-905-1155 | hcn.org

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Taking initiative

The West is a land of big skies, wide-open spaces — and long ballots

BY JOSHUA ZAFFOS

A person making minimum wage in Arizona earns \$8.05 an hour. At full-time, that adds up to less than \$17,000 a year, before taxes — better than the federal minimum wage of \$7.25, but still not enough to lift workers above the federal poverty line. Nevertheless, this spring, state lawmakers rejected a modest, incremental wage hike, to \$9.50 by 2020.

Yet economic-justice activists and union supporters were unfazed by the legislative failure. That's because — like most Westerners — they had another option: They could put the question directly to voters. This summer, they gathered enough petition signatures to put a more ambitious initiative on the November ballot. Proposition 206 would raise the minimum wage to \$10 in 2017, and then gradually to \$12 by 2020. A recent Arizona poll found that voters support it by a 2-to-1 margin. Similar measures are on the ballots in Colorado and Washington.

Every Western state except New Mexico allows citizens to make new laws at the ballot box, compared to just over half of all states. The region embraced direct democracy 100 years ago as a populist response to corporate power and ineffective government. This election season, individual states will vote on approving universal healthcare, legalizing assisted death for terminally ill patients, creating the country's first carbon tax, and repealing the death penalty. And in addition to wage hikes, multiple states will consider measures that would establish tougher background checks for gun and ammo sales,

and legalize marijuana. Those initiatives are attracting big bucks from national organizations and wealthy donors, making the West a proving ground for certain progressive causes.

"Washington gridlock (is) forcing states to tackle these issues," says Bill Scheel, the campaign manager for the Arizona wage hike. And in Republican-controlled states, he adds, "the only way we're going to move these issues is through the ballot box."

The enthusiasm for ballot initiatives can be traced back to 1978, when Californians approved Proposition 13, which radically cut property taxes and capped future tax increases. It showed the sweeping power of direct democracy and triggered similar reforms nationwide. Some even credit it with kick-starting the modern conservative movement.

Now, liberal groups are increasingly using ballot measures to pursue far-reaching reforms of their own. As of September, the New York-based Everytown for Gun Safety had spent more than \$3.2 million on Nevada's Question 1, which would require any sale or transfer of a firearm to go through a licensed gun dealer who can run federal background checks. The Fairness Project, backed by California unions, has contributed \$338,000 to the Arizona minimum wage campaign, and \$200,000 each to the campaigns in Colorado and Washington.

Billionaire benefactors, often from the tech world, have also bankrolled campaigns. Sean Parker, the former Facebook president, has given hundreds of thousands of dollars to background-check and pot legalization campaigns in Nevada

The Arizona Healthy Working Families Initiative group delivers more than 270,000 signatures to the elections office in Phoenix, enough to put a measure on the ballot to raise the state's minimum wage to \$12 an hour by 2020 and provide earned sick days to workers.

ROSS D. FRANKLIN/AP PHOTO

and California. Nick Hanauer, a Seattle venture capitalist and founding investor in Amazon, has given \$500,000 to the Washington minimum wage campaign, and \$275,000 to the Nevada gun control measure.

Such spending reflects the fact that it's increasingly difficult for purely grassroots initiatives to reach the ballot, says Todd Donovan, a Western Washington University political science professor. Most states require petition signatures from 5 to 10 percent of registered voters, and with populations growing in many Western states, campaigns have to spend ever more time and money to meet that mark. Case in point: Two grassroots anti-fracking campaigns in Colorado came up short on signatures after relying mostly on volunteers, while the energy industry spent readily from a \$16.8 million war chest to urge citizens to "decline to sign."

But Donovan says the surge of money from national groups and wealthy individuals isn't necessarily a bad thing. "Ironically, it levels the playing field" for progressive causes, he says, because corporations and industry trade groups spend hundreds of millions of dollars each election to torpedo ballot measures that could dent their bottom lines. In Colorado and Arizona, restaurant associations are contributing to defeat the minimum-wage hikes, while a handful of health-care and insurance providers have each given between \$250,000 and \$1 million to kill Colorado's universal health-care initiative.

Interestingly, politicians on both sides of the aisle are also resisting many of these initiatives. Democratic lawmakers and candidates have declined to endorse the Washington carbon tax and the Colorado health-care measure. Party leaders have criticized funding mechanisms, and even backed away from previous support on those issues.

But backers believe their efforts can bring voters to the polls and sway skittish politicians, especially in an election when people are less than excited about the presidential candidates. In at least one case, the threat of a ballot vote propelled lawmakers into action: This spring, after a slightly more aggressive wage-hike measure was certified for the California ballot, legislators passed a law to raise the minimum wage to \$15 by 2022. Proponents then withdrew their initiative — proof, says The Fairness Project's executive director Ryan Johnson, that "ballot initiatives serve as really powerful messages to elected officials." □

24 Number of states targeted for minimum wage hikes through ballot initiatives by a \$25 million nationwide campaign by The Fairness Project.

\$4 million

Contributions to help pass legalization measures in Arizona, California, Nevada, Maine and Massachusetts from individuals or groups with "direct financial stakes" in the marijuana retail industry.

18 Number of measures on the California ballot this November. Voters will consider repealing the death penalty, regulating prescription drug prices, banning plastic grocery bags and mandating condoms for porn actors, among other issues.

\$22 million

State lottery money to go toward an Oregon "Outdoor School Education Fund" to support outdoor ed and science programs for fifth and sixth graders, if voters approve Measure 99.

12 Number of endangered species, including rhinos, tigers and elephants, to be protected through an Oregon ballot measure that would prohibit selling the animals' parts and products. The measure, supported by the Humane Society, resembles a 2015 initiative passed in Washington.

\$100 - \$150

Amount per ton that carbon pollution must cost by 2050 in order to meet Washington's goal of cutting emissions to half of 1990 levels by 2050, according to Sightline Institute estimates. Initiative 732 would set the initial price at \$15 a ton, and gradually raise it. Sightline estimates it would reach about \$100 by 2059. For more on initiatives like Washington's carbon tax, visit hcn.org.

SOURCES: WASHINGTON POST, CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEGRITY, BALLOTEDIA, SIGHTLINE INSTITUTE

Correspondent Joshua Zaffos writes from Fort Collins, Colorado. [@jzaffos](https://twitter.com/jzaffos)

CLAIM JUMPERS

This past election cycle has been characterized by wild claims, with the national media roundly criticized by both sides for its inability to fact-check statements. Here we look at some of these claims and the realities they obscure.

ANNA V. SMITH

THE CLAIM

Colorado Republican Rep. Scott Tipton's campaign has said that his challenger, former state Sen. Gail Schwartz, "led the charge in the war on coal at Colorado's Capitol," releasing ads pinning the closing of coal mines squarely on her. Schwartz has been a leader in renewable energy legislation, but there are more significant causes behind coal's decline, including market shifts, bad management and federal regulations.

IN FACT

Though Schwartz has had an impact on Colorado's energy policy, it is not accurate that she "led the charge" on the closing of coal mines.

THE CLAIM

In the Republican nominee's long-awaited immigration speech in Arizona on Aug. 31, Donald Trump claimed that the federal government has "no idea" how many unauthorized immigrants live in the United States. "It's always 11 million. Our government has no idea. It could be 3 million. It could be 30 million. They have no idea what the number is."

IN FACT

The Department of Homeland Security puts the number at 11 million based on census data, a number supported by multiple nongovernmental research centers that has varied little in the last few years.

TRUMP'S TROUBLES

Undocumented immigrants work to get out the vote

BY PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER

In early June, Juan Gallegos joined a rally in California for presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders, then vying for the Democratic nomination. Gallegos — an undocumented immigrant who is ineligible to vote and whose residency depends on a presidential order and a permit — never expected he'd participate in the American political process. Yet there he was, a high-energy millennial with a broad smile, flanked by Bernie T-shirts and waving flags, cheering for the Democratic Party.

Almost exactly one year before that rally, Donald Trump had announced his own bid for the White House, promising mass deportations and a border wall between the U.S. and Mexico. Trump's message rapidly gained traction among Republican primary voters. In late August, in a speech in Arizona, Trump doubled down on his anti-immigrant platform and laid out plans for a special deportation taskforce. Gallegos decided that the best way he could protect his own future was to become engaged in politics and try to convince his peers to vote on his behalf.

Gallegos is one of many young undocumented immigrants — the so-called Dreamers, named after the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act rejected by the Senate in 2010 — who have become politically active in response to Trump's rise. Gallegos, who was born in Tulum, Mexico, moved to Nebraska when he was 12 and graduated from the state's flagship university in 2010. But a graduate without proof of citizenship can't do much, Gallegos recalls; his first job was installing irrigation pipes. In 2011, President Barack Obama, under an executive order called the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, postponed the deportation of young adults like Gallegos. The order allowed Gallegos to intern for a Denver communications firm. Now he volunteers for the Latino Get Out the Vote effort for Democrat Hillary Clinton's campaign. "Trump has promised he will get rid of DACA and deport everyone," Gallegos says. "There is too much at stake for our communities to sit and watch Trump take the White House."

Trump's presidential bid has raised the profile of Latino voters, and inspired the growing politicization of an unlikely group: Gallegos and Dreamers like him who are unable to vote themselves. They are mobilizing voters by drawing attention

to Trump's threatening rhetoric. And their message is taking hold in important swing states like Nevada, Arizona and Colorado.

Nationwide, about 12 percent of the country's eligible voters are Latino. The West is home to nearly 40 percent of them, far surpassing other regions. The Latino voting bloc is also in transition: This year, there are more than 27.3 million eligible Hispanic voters (up from 19.5 million in 2008). Those voters are generally younger and more politically engaged: 63 percent of Latino voters say they will vote in the general election, compared to less than 10 percent who said they would in 2008, according to Pew Research. Why the increase? Lorella Praeli, national Latino vote director for the Clinton campaign, says: "There is so much fear, so much anger and so much at stake in a Donald Trump presidency."

The Dreamers are purpling the Western swing states of Nevada, Colorado and Arizona (see story, page 14). In Scottsdale, Arizona, the Dreamer organization Promise Arizona helped bump Arizona's Latino voter registration to nearly 1.3 million from fewer than 800,000 in 2008. Latinos are becoming more active in other important battleground states in the West, too. In Nevada, home of the largest percentage of undocumented immigrants, nearly 197,000 Latinos registered this year, compared to about 143,000 in 2008. Colorado

doesn't track registered voters by race, but 555,000 Latinos were eligible for this year's primary, compared to 404,000 in 2008.

Groups in other states are taking advantage of the Trump factor, as well. In Sonoma County, California, the North Bay Organizing Project, a nonprofit led by Latino vineyard workers, shifted its focus from low-income housing efforts to keeping Trump out of the White House. Dreamers in Santa Fe, New Mexico, say the local Hispanic population has also been emboldened. "(Trump) has created an opportunity for Clinton to court that vote," says Allegra Love, an immigration lawyer and head of the Santa Fe Dreamers organization. "His stances on issues that impact immigrants are so out of control that she just has to come across as not racist."

While the success of their efforts will remain unknown until after Election Day, Clinton is certainly capitalizing on their momentum. In August, she launched a campaign called "Mi Sueño, Tu Voto," ("My Dream, Your Vote") that solicits the help of young undocumented immigrants to spur registration among eligible Latino voters. When the campaign hit West Denver, Gallegos was there, making calls. At the campaign office recently, he could be heard pleading with a Spanish-only speaker: "We could really throw away this election if we don't mobilize," he said. "If Donald Trump is elected, will he come after us?" □



Juan Gallegos, an undocumented immigrant protected by a Deferred Action permit, calls Hispanic voters while campaigning with Kathelijne Niessen, to his left, and campaign organizer Casey Anne Macauley in the West Denver Hillary Clinton Campaign office. PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER



Why Utah's Mormons aren't thrilled with this year's GOP candidate

BY SARAH TORY

When Donald Trump was named the Republican presidential nominee, Calene Van Noy, a 42-year-old member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, said she felt a sense of horror. In every other presidential race she'd been eligible to vote in, she'd supported the GOP, and for a second, she entertained the possibility of doing so again. But then she remembered what Trump had said about immigrants, Muslims and Syrian refugees, and Van Noy knew that this year would be different.

Many of Van Noy's Mormon neighbors, motivated in part by their faith's not-too-distant history of persecution, believe in helping refugees. "They are amazing," she says of refugees. "They're the sort of people we want in America."

Mormons are normally among the West's most reliable Republican voters, but not this year. In Utah, where two-thirds of eligible voters are members of the Mormon Church, the latest polls show Trump just 15 points ahead of his Democratic rival, Hillary Clinton — 39 percent to 24 percent. The contrast with past elections is striking: In the last three presidential contests, Republican candidates won between 63 and 73 percent of the Utah vote.

Trump's dismal support among Mor-

mons has turned Utah into a swing state for the first time since 1964, as LDS voters find themselves torn between their political and ethical beliefs. As Trump himself put it to a group of evangelical leaders at an August event in Orlando: "We're having a tremendous problem in Utah."

Trump's Utah problem is fairly easy to explain. "He's rude, insulting, racist, misogynist, arrogant, flippant, ill-informed, and, more than anything, is completely self-obsessed," says Sven Wilson, a longtime Republican and former Utah GOP state delegate. "Mormons strive to be a highly moral people, and Trump is a morally hideous man — and proud of it."

For the Mormon Church, Trump crossed a line last December. His call for a temporary ban on Muslims entering the U.S. was a disturbing echo of Secretary of State William Evarts' attempt in 1879 — under President Rutherford B. Hayes — to limit Mormon immigration to the United States. After Trump's proposed Muslim ban, the church issued a statement: "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is neutral in regard to party politics and election campaigns. However, it is not neutral in relation to religious freedom."

Still, voting decisions among Mormons are less clear-cut. Polls show that 56 percent of Utah's Mormons dislike Trump, but even more are turned off by Clinton,

Visitors walk by the Latter-day Saints Temple in Salt Lake City. Donald Trump's morals and policy positions have led some Mormons, who typically vote Republican, to rethink their party vote for this election. KIM RAFF

with 84 percent giving her an unfavorable rating in one recent poll.

Clinton will have a tough time capitalizing on Trump's weakness in Utah. "A lot of Mormons will still vote for Trump," says Wilson, "but most will do so holding their noses."

Steve Densley, a Salt Lake City-based attorney and registered Republican, calls Trump a "vulgar, devious swine," but he says he will vote for him nevertheless. Since none of the third-party candidates have a hope of winning the general election, voting for an independent, in Densley's view, is like voting for Clinton, which he says he could never do: "We can't always count on Trump to act like a conservative, but we can count on Hillary to act like a liberal."

Densley's confidence that Trump is more likely to appoint conservatives to federal office was bolstered by the GOP nominee's choice of Mike Pence as a running mate and by Trump's list of potential Supreme Court nominees, which includes Utah Justice Thomas Lee, a popular conservative candidate among many Mormons.

Trump has also won support among some of Utah's political elite, including Senate Majority Leader Ralph Okerlund and Robert Oakes, a former general authority of the LDS Church. Like Densley, they believe that Trump would fill government positions with people who reflect conservative values, such as strengthening national defense, protecting religious liberties, and promoting family values.

After disavowing Trump, Van Noy contemplated voting for Clinton. But when she pictured herself at the polls, she decided she could not do it — not with Clinton being a Democrat. In addition, Van Noy feels that Clinton shares some of Trump's flaws, including the sense of "being above the law." Instead, she plans on voting for independent candidate Evan McMullin, a Utah native and a Mormon, who is positioning himself as an alternative to Trump.

A strong showing for McMullin in Utah would be good news for Clinton, says Jeremy Pope, the co-director of the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at Brigham Young University. Even if McMullin does well only in the Beehive State, it would be a bad sign for the GOP, since the chances of Trump winning the presidency without Utah are slim.

Van Noy has reluctantly reconciled herself to that outcome. "At least with Clinton, we know what kind of mess we'd get," she says. "With Trump, who knows what kind of chaos he would unleash? It's scary for America and for the world." □

Trump's dismal support among Mormons has turned Utah into a swing state for the first time since 1964.

CLAIM JUMPERS

THE CLAIM

During the Democratic National Convention, California Gov. Jerry Brown called Trump's vice presidential running mate, Mike Pence, "a man who denies that there's such a thing as evolution."

IN FACT

Pence told MSNBC in 2009: "I embrace the view that God created the heavens and the earth and the seas and all that's in them." Though he has not stated outright that he believes in evolution, he has not explicitly denied its existence, either.

GAGE SKIDMORE



Mike Pence

THE CLAIM

A press release from former Nevada Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto's campaign in her Senate race, against Nevada Rep. Joe Heck, said that it is "next to impossible" to find a difference between Heck and Trump on immigration.

IN FACT

This is decidedly untrue. Heck has not publicly supported building a solid border wall, has said he opposes mass deportation and that he is open to immigrants having opportunities to gain citizenship once in the U.S. — each point a fundamental divergence from Trump.

Not politics as usual

Denise Juneau hopes to become the first Native American woman in Congress

BY TAY WILES

"I like to tell people I'm the product of a federal policy," Denise Juneau, the head of Montana's public school system, once told a packed auditorium of Harvard students, alumni and faculty. Her mother, a member of the Mandan Hidatsa Tribes, began dating her Blackfeet father in Oakland, California, after they had both relocated there as part of a Bureau of Indian Affairs program designed to alleviate poverty and isolation on reservations by bringing Native Americans into cities. Juneau's words reflected a harsh historical truth as well as a bit of dark humor; the Harvard audience chuckled, somewhat uneasily, in response. At 5-foot-10, Juneau has a round face, chin-length brown hair and a calm demeanor. Her comment revealed the classic combination of blunt candor and disarming ease that has helped earn her near-celebrity status in Montana Indian Country.

As superintendent of public instruction for the past nine years, Juneau, 49, became known for promoting educational policies that benefit all Montana students, not just Native Americans. She was the first Native American woman in the country elected to a statewide executive position, and this November, she hopes to break down more barriers. Juneau, a Democrat, is campaigning to become Montana's sole U.S. House representative and the first-ever Native American woman in the United States Congress. She is also the state's first openly gay candidate for federal office.

The Juneau campaign has its work cut out for it. Montana has historically been a red state, though its gubernatorial and U.S. Senate seats frequently go blue. A Democrat hasn't been elected to the U.S. House of Representatives since 1994, though, nor a Democratic presidential candidate favored since 1992. Montanans haven't elected a woman to the U.S. Congress since 1940. To win, Juneau needs most of the Native vote, and American Indians have some of the lowest voter turnout among U.S. ethnic groups. But Juneau feels empowered by the people who came before her. Making change through education and political empowerment isn't just something she's read about — it's a long family tradition. "I've always just sort of plowed forward," she says, "having the

strength of family and knowing there are these values that we're really steeped in."

Juneau's tribal membership comes from her mother, Carol, who grew up on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota. In 1946, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers built the Garrison Dam on the Missouri River, which submerged her community and destroyed local fishing and agriculture. "They picked us up and moved us," she remembers. "My dad fought against it really strongly." As college students, Carol, now 71, and her husband, Stan, now 72, joined the Billings American Indian Council and participated in social justice actions. When they had children, they brought them along to protests.

When she was just a toddler, Juneau made her first political stand, accompanying her brother and their parents to a protest against the lack of law enforcement response to the recent murders of five Native Americans in Billings. Juneau doesn't recall that event in particular, but her youthful activism had a lasting impact: "My parents really instilled these values of standing up for yourself."

The family later moved to Browning on Montana's Blackfeet Reservation. Juneau was fairly shy, though she played offense on the high school basketball team, became captain and won several athletic awards her junior and senior years. (She still uses the "full court press" metaphor in speeches.)

Juneau's parents were educators in local public schools. They entered the field less because they were passionate about teaching than because of its employment opportunities. But ultimately, teaching became more than a job: "We believed that if people find success in education, they would find success in other parts of their life," Carol says. "Maybe young kids could continue on to college, help with the economic development and social changes on reservations." When Juneau was a teenager, her mother became active in a national movement to create tribal colleges on reservations. Back then, only a couple existed in the West; now there are dozens. Carol established the Blackfeet Community College, one of Montana's first.

During high school, Juneau took additional classes there. She later attended Montana State University in Bozeman, where she earned a bachelor's in English

and served as vice president of the Indian Club, which organized the annual student powwow. One college classmate remembers her as "always in the Indian Club room," where American Indian students connected with other tribal members, telephoned home to reservations, or just did homework in a safe space. At MSU, Juneau saw a poster for a Rockefeller student fellowship. She applied, got it, and used it to attend Harvard University, where she earned her master's degree in education. Going to Harvard, Juneau says, "was a long journey in many ways, not just geography."

Later, Juneau became interested in education policy and its intersection with politics. "My mom had been in the Legislature," she says, serving as a Democratic state representative from 1998 to 2008 and later, as a state senator. "I'd watched her do a lot of standing up for people who didn't have a voice. I thought that was super powerful." Inspired, Juneau went to law school, and then clerked for Montana Supreme Court judges for several years. In 2006, she became director of Indian education at the state Office of Public Instruction.

"The things that you learn in school, like 'Westward expansion,'" Juneau once said, "well, we think of it sort of as an Eastern invasion. It's all about perspective." As head of Indian education, Juneau worked to get more diverse perspectives into classrooms across Montana. The program, called Indian Education for All, was made possible by work her mother had done as a legislator years before. In 1999, Carol Juneau sponsored a bill and later testified in a lawsuit to implement and fund an unfulfilled promise in the state Constitution to be "committed in its educational goals to the preservation of (American Indian) cultural integrity."

Starting in 2006, Denise Juneau used that funding to train educators, identify inaccurate or biased textbooks and encourage Montana tribes to create their own personal histories to be taught in all state schools, on and off reservations. Juneau once described the program as "a quiet revolution happening in classrooms across Montana." Some critics, however, called it reverse discrimination, asking why there wasn't also funding to improve *Norwegian* history lessons, or why she hadn't created *French* education for all." Despite the criticism, educators in other states now look to Montana as a model for reform. It was the only state to integrate an Indian Education for All program into the Common Core curriculum that swept the nation a few years ago.

In 2008, Juneau successfully ran for superintendent of Montana public education, beginning her political career in earnest. She was re-elected in 2012. While superintendent, Juneau disseminated an

Associate Editor Tay Wiles writes from Oakland, California. [@taywiles](#)

\$11.4 million federal grant for low-performing schools. She took an unconventional approach, however, first looking at how similar grants in the past had improved schools. Mostly, they hadn't. "The school systems were a little chaotic," says Mandy Smoker-Broaddus, now head of Indian education in Montana. "(Juneau)

partnered with them more directly and walked alongside them." She requested that the state hand out the money instead of the federal government, so that she and her staff could work directly with the lowest-performing schools — all of which were on reservations.

"Schools felt isolated," says Smoker-Broaddus. "They were looking at Denise and the rest of our team, saying, 'We need help and we don't know where to go next.'" Distrust of state and federally sponsored education still lingers in many reservation communities, following a long history of institutionalized discrimination. But now, instead of a white superintendent, no matter how well-intentioned, "it was an American Indian for the first time, saying, 'We want to help you and do something different,'" she says. "They were able to have a level of trust. Because (Juneau) looked like them and came from a community like theirs, it made the difference."

While over a dozen Native American men have served in Congress since 1907, no Native American woman has. Only 20 percent of congressional lawmakers are currently women. And although the sitting U.S. Congress is the most diverse yet, only 8 percent of Native Americans are represented in the House by a member of their ethnic group. The reasons for this are as complex and far-reaching as U.S. history itself.

Like many states, Montana effectively denied American Indians the right to vote for decades. In 1932, the state Constitution was changed to allow only "qualified, taxpaying" residents to vote. Because Native Americans on reservations did not pay property taxes, they could not register to vote. That statute stayed in place until 1971, and even today, Native American and Alaska Native voter turnout nationwide is 5 to 14 percent lower than other groups.

Having Native Americans in high-level administrative roles or running for office can help prime the electorate for future races, says Jacqueline Pata, executive director of the advocacy group National Congress for American Indians. In Montana, former Gov. Brian Schweitzer, D, appointed more Native Americans to key administrative positions than ever before. It "got other people exposed to the fact that Native Americans are smart and solution-oriented, like anyone else, and trustworthy," Pata says.

In order for Denise Juneau to win her bid for Congress, more Native Americans in Montana will have to vote than usual, since she's battling an incumbent for a seat that usually goes Republican, says Jeremy Johnson, a political science professor at Carroll College in Helena. This is the first year that Montana's seven reservations have all had either a voter registration office or polling place, so tribal members no

longer have to drive an hour or more to register. Staffers at the nonprofit Western Native Voice even went door-to-door this summer with the ambitious goal of adding 5,000 new Native American voters this year to the state's current 15,259. Most of Montana's Native voters are Democrats, and if at least 65 percent of them go to the polls, says the group's head, Marci McLean, Juneau might win.

The so-called "Trump factor" could affect votes for incumbent Republican Ryan Zinke, Juneau's opponent. Zinke spoke at the Republican National Convention in July and has actively supported Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. That support could win Zinke votes from the far right, since the state's Republicans mostly voted for Trump in the primary. There's also a chance Zinke could lose votes from more moderate GOP voters unhappy with Trump's unconventional campaign and polarizing rhetoric. If the latter happens, Juneau could eke out a win, or at least make it a close race.

"Discrediting the opponent is important for Denise Juneau," Johnson says. "She needs to do that in order to beat Zinke," since Montana leans red. And Juneau's campaign seems to be spending a significant amount of time trying to do just that. "Congressman Zinke's unyielding support of Trump — no matter what comes out of his mouth — is shameful," Juneau said in August. To counter, Zinke's team criticizes Juneau for not distancing herself from "the architect of Benghazi, Hillary Clinton." Juneau opposes transferring federal lands to state control and supports permanent authorization for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. As a member of the state land board, Juneau has voted both for and against various Montana coal projects.

Zinke and Juneau have debated several times since August. This year, for the first time ever, two debates are tentatively planned to be on Indian reservations, one on the Crow Nation, where past Republican candidates have made inroads, in part because it's coal country. Johnson says the reservation debates are due to the increased attention the Native vote is receiving this cycle. That should help Juneau. But whatever happens, her mother, Carol, says it's satisfying to watch her daughter continue where she left off: "Denise is the next step, the federal level."

Most analysts consider Juneau's bid a fairly long shot, depending on whether progressives and Native Americans make it to the polls in large numbers this November. In some ways, Juneau's future is a test of what she and her family have been working toward for decades: "It's big in our family, making sure that Indian people vote," Juneau says. "We believe that our vote is our voice." □

Denise Juneau speaks at a community meal at the Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation in Lama, Montana during her tour of the state's seven reservations. About 150 to 200 community members came to the event.

COURTESY DENISE JUNEAU FOR CONGRESS



Snapshot

Western races to watch

Democrats hope to nab vulnerable Republican seats

So much attention is going to the rhetoric of Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump that it can be easy to forget about this election’s other important races. Republicans hold the majority in the U.S. House, Senate and over half of the nation’s state House and Senate seats, but this fall, Democrats hope to chip away at those strongholds. In the West, races in four state legislatures could determine which party holds that state’s majority.

Some analysts predict that Democrats stand a decent chance, since their constituents tend to vote in higher numbers during general elections than in mid-term years. “Just based on structural factors, Democrats should do fairly well, and that’s not factoring in any Trump impact on down-ballot voting,” says Louis Jacobson, a columnist on state politics for the non-partisan magazine *Governing*. In other words, some Republicans who usually turn out to support their party’s presidential candidate, and then vote in other races

as well, might not show up at all because they don’t support Trump. Low voter turnout would affect not just Trump’s chances, but those of other Republicans running for congressional and state races.

In the U.S. House of Representatives, Republicans hold the majority by 30 seats. The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee is putting its weight behind 14 promising Western candidates. Colorado state Sen. Morgan Carroll, a clean-energy supporter, for example, is challenging conservative Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman. And Ruben Kihuen, a Mexican-American Nevada state senator, is attempting to unseat Rep. Crescent Hardy, a Trump supporter. With so many red seats up for grabs, Republicans are largely on the defensive, though they hope to flip some blue seats in Arizona, California and New Mexico.

In the U.S. Senate, Republicans are trying to retain 24 seats, nine in the West. The most contentious races are likely to involve Sen. John McCain’s seat in Ari-

zona and the open seat left by Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., who is retiring. To take over the Senate, Democrats would need to gain five seats — four if their presidential nominee, Hillary Clinton, is elected. Both parties are also looking at the long game, by trying to set up state majorities for the next congressional redistricting in 2020.

In five Western states — Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, Utah and Arizona — Republicans hold both legislative chambers and the governor’s office. Democrats hold all three offices in California and Oregon. State-level elections are particularly significant in states where one party controls a trifecta. This year, a number of state chambers are up for grabs: the Colorado Senate, the Nevada Senate, Washington’s Senate and House, and the New Mexico House.

In Washington state, which has a slim Democratic majority in the state’s House and a Democratic governor, issues such as climate change regulations have stalled in the GOP-controlled state Senate. Democrats there hope to win two more Senate seats, while holding the House and governorship.

Nevada is a Republican trifecta state, but is competitive in the state Senate and its congressional seats, and has the potential to flip from red to blue. ANNA V. SMITH

U.S. Senate, House and state legislature seats Democrats could claim				
State	Race	Incumbent	Challenger	Why it’s a red-to-blue target
AZ	U.S. Senate	Sen. John McCain, R	Arizona Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, D	It’s one of the seats Democrats need for a Senate majority. Latino voter turnout will play a big role, given Trump’s rhetoric around immigration, since McCain has endorsed him.
AZ	U.S. House	Open	Tom O’Halloran, D, vs. Sheriff of Pinal County Paul Babeu, R	Democrats have held this district the last two election cycles, and they see O’Halloran, a former Republican-turned-Independent and now a moderate Democrat, as a good match for Babeu, a tough-talking conservative.
CA	U.S. House	Rep. Steve Knight, R	Attorney Bryan Caforio, D	It’s one of 30 races the Democrats hope to take to gain the majority in the House. The <i>Cook Political Report</i> has called Knight, who was elected in 2014, the most vulnerable incumbent in California. Since the last election, registered Democratic voters in Knight’s 25th District have surpassed registered Republicans.
CO	U.S. House	Rep. Mike Coffman, R	State Sen. Morgan Carroll, D	This seat has been red since 1983, but redistricting in 2011 increased Hispanic voters from 6 percent to 20 percent, and Democrats hope this may finally turn it blue.
CO	State Senate	State Sen. Laura Woods, R	Former State Rep. Rachel Zenzinger, D	Democrats are one seat away from controlling the Colorado Senate, and if they hold onto the governor’s office and Colorado House, they could have a trifecta. Zenzinger and Woods faced off in 2014, and Woods won by just 1 percent.
NV	U.S. House	Rep. Crescent Hardy, R	State Sen. Ruben Kihuen, D	President Barack Obama carried this district four years ago. Democrats see Hardy’s seat, which he has held for one term, as one they should not have lost in a 2014 backslide.
NV	U.S. Senate	Open	Attorney General Catherine Cortez Masto, D, vs. Rep. Joe Heck, R	It’s one of the seats Democrats need for a Senate majority. Nevada is an ethnically diverse state, and Cortez Masto is pinning Trump’s rhetoric onto Heck. If elected, Cortez Masto would be the first Latina in the U.S. Senate.
NV	U.S. House	Open	Jacky Rosen, D, vs. Danny Tarkanian, R	The district tends to be red, but voted for a Democratic representative in 2008, and Obama in 2012. Tarkanian has run for, and lost, multiple campaigns for public office in Nevada.
UT	U.S. House	Rep. Mia Love, R	Attorney Doug Owens, D	When Love and Owens faced off in 2014, Love, the first black female Republican in Congress, won by just 5 percent. This time Owens is on the Democrat’s Red to Blue list, giving him outsized support and funding.
WA	State Senate	State Sen. Steve O’Ban, R	Marisa Peloquin, D	The district has a large military constituency, which helped elect O’Ban, but Peloquin, a colonel in the Army Reserve, could gain some of those voters.

Photo contest winners

Capturing our national parks

Just in time for the National Park Service's 100-year anniversary, our readers submitted nearly 300 images to our annual photo contest. Below, you can see their expression of the beauty of the parks and the joy they clearly inspired. To see more reader and editor favorites, visit hcne.ws/NPSphotos.



◀ Rocky Mountain National Park

Hikers cross The Narrows, an exposed ledge on the south side of Long's Peak, the highest mountain in the Colorado park. The photographer and his friends started their ascent at 2 a.m., a safe practice for summiting a Fourteener with 14.5 miles of hiking. JOHN HERRICK

▼ Mount St. Helens Volcanic National Monument

The 1980 eruption devastated the lush Washington forest in the Cascades. Over time, plants crept back into the blast zone until fields of wildflowers such as penstemon, lupine and Indian paintbrush took over. MICHAEL REMKE



▲ Denali National Park

A caribou walks in front of Denali, the tallest mountain in North America, formerly Mount McKinley. Obama renamed it in 2015 to restore the Alaska Native name and honor its cultural significance. TAYLOR HINES

► Crater Lake National Park

The rich blue, clear water of Crater Lake in Oregon makes it a spectacular destination. It is also the deepest lake in the United States, with a depth of 1,949 feet.

DAVE TAUBE



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IRWIN KLEIN AND THE NEW SETTLERS

Edited by Benjamin Klein, photos by Irwin Klein
192 pages, hardcover: \$29.95.
University of Nebraska Press, 2016

During the 1960s, America's counterculture was brewing: A new generation was seeking answers, determined to live differently than their post-World War II parents. The photographs in *Irwin Klein and the New Settlers* document the hippie movement into New Mexico from 1967 to 1971. Klein, who died in Brooklyn in 1974, called them the "new settlers," saying that, like their predecessors, the Old West pioneers, these young people represented the "embodiment of a mythic American West where people could go to reinvent themselves."

Klein's stark black-and-white photos show the young men and women as he found them, from daily chores like chopping wood, to expressive portraits and communal celebrations. The photos gain historical depth from essays by scholars, describing this time of cultural upheaval, including the conflicts between the new settlers and the Hispanic, Native and other local residents impacted by the "hippie invasion." ANNA V. SMITH

Wedding feast at Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico. IRWIN KLEIN

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Kathy Percival | Stateline, NV
Steven Polan & Elizabeth Roistacher | Crested Butte, CO
Forrest G. Poole | Golden, CO
Deborah Proctor | Gillette, WY
Edgar Rawl | Tucson, AZ

Fawn Ring | Chicago, IL
Nancy M. Rivera | Silver City, NM
Karen Robinson, Salida Fiber Festival | Buena Vista, CO
Tony Ruckel | Denver, CO
Gregg Rugolo | Santa Monica, CA
William E. Sawrey | Long Beach, CA
Bill Schoenecker | New Castle, CO
Kate Segerstrom | Sonora, CA
Raymond Smead | Boulder, CO
Melissa Smith | Cave Creek, AZ
Michael Smith | Eugene, OR
Dan & Denise Snow | Divide, CO
Sonja Sollie | Bremerton, WA
Thomas St. Martin | Denver, CO
Caitlin Stahl | Seattle, WA
Douglas Steeples | Macon, GA
Sari H. Stein | Grants, NM
William Steinhour | Colorado Springs, CO
Kaarle Straley | Palmer, AK
John Stutzman | Albuquerque, NM
John M. Syverud | Pleasant Valley, IA
Sara Rose Tannenbaum | New Haven, CT
Paula Taylor | Loma Linda, CA
Richard Thomas | Salt Lake City, UT
Pat & Dick Tourangeau | Hamilton, MT
George H. Trudeau | Anchor Point, AK
Russell Tyldesley | Santa Fe, NM
Butch Ukura | Deerwood, MN
John Ulmer | Boulder, CO
Catherine Viele & Michael Delaney | Ojo Caliente, NM
Frank Vladich | Tucson, AZ
Carl von Ende | DeKalb, IL
C. Weber | Northport, WA
Jerry R. Welsh | Eugene, OR
Michael Werner | Las Vegas, NV
Janet West | Salyer, CA
Victor Whitmore | Boise, ID
Don Whyde | Casper, WY
Marlene Willie | Manitou Springs, CO
Bob Wolff | Santa Monica, CA
Anthony Zampini | Peebles Valley, AZ
R. Miller & T. Zaworski | Tempe, AZ
Dave Zumwalt | Antioch, CA

Visits from students and an issue break

It's starting to feel like autumn in Paonia. Breezes are getting crisper, ripe apples are dropping, and the aspen leaves are turning gold. The season has been busy here at *High Country News* headquarters, as we make some staffing adjustments.

Tay Wiles, our former online editor, is moving to the San Francisco Bay area, where she'll be *HCN's* associate editor, focusing on public lands and the Great Basin through on-the-ground reporting and special projects. **Kate Schimel**, formerly our assistant editor, will take the helm of the online operation as deputy editor—digital.

Now we're in the midst of hiring a new assistant editor and another associate editor. Applications are pouring in, reminding us of the many wonderful readers and journalists who support us.

We're thrilled to announce that Contributing Editor **Jonathan Thompson** has been recognized by the Society of Environmental Journalists: He won first place for "outstanding beat reporting in a small market," for his coverage of environmental and energy issues, including last year's Gold King Mine spill.

Former intern **Lisa Song** and her team at *InsideClimate News* won first place for "outstanding in-depth reporting in a small market" for their series "Exxon: The Road Not Taken." **Ana Maria Spagna**, a frequent contributor to the magazine, also won an honorable mention for her book *Reclaimers*, which we excerpted in 2015.

Lots of visitors stopped in this month, catching the last days of Colorado summer. A

group of University of Denver students toured the office and hung out with our editorial team. We had a great afternoon discussing what kind of stories they are most interested in and how they consume digital and print media. The students were intrigued by the writing processes we use for long-form and investigative stories, how we approach different audiences, and the role *HCN* plays in the larger environmental media landscape. Inspired by their thoughtful questions, we've anointed them *HCN's* first focus group.

Mike Kusiek from Rapid City, South Dakota, made a pit stop here before continuing his motorcycle ride from Crested Butte, Colorado, to Moab, Utah. Afterward, he sent us Mark Woods' book *Lassoing the Sun*, which he highly recommended. **Janna Treisman**, from Falls City, Washington, detoured through Paonia to buy some peaches while driving from Gunnison, Colorado, and re-upped her subscription while she was here. Thanks for showing us some love, Janna! **Jim Furnish** traveled all the way from Washington, D.C., to visit us while on his book tour. A subscriber since 1979 and Writers on the Range contributor, he brought a copy of his memoir, *Toward a Natural Forest*, which is about his Forest Service career. It was great to meet you all.

We're taking our fall print break after this issue, so check out hcn.org for stories in the meantime. See y'all at the end of October!

—Lyndsey Gilpin, for the staff



Students from an environmental science class at the University of Denver came to *HCN* to talk with editors about the latest stories. BROOKE WARREN

In Arizona's shift toward purple, 'bigotry' and vitriol hasten the pace

Democrats hope increased Latino turnout will upset Republican dominance in the state



The Café Royale is a two-story stucco building with a royal blue wraparound porch. This cheery café serves lattes and regular cups of joe to the working-class, heavily Latino community of Avondale, west of Phoenix. Lately, though, it also serves as a hub of Democratic activism. The local Democratic Party headquarters occupies the building's second floor, and the immaculate coffee shop below regularly hosts political events.

One weekday this summer, Ann Kirkpatrick, the Democratic congresswoman determined to eject Sen. John McCain from the seat he's held for 30 years, arrives at the Café Royale and is greeted by leaders from the Latino communities of Phoenix's western suburbs.

This is new territory for Kirkpatrick, whose sprawling congressional district includes nearly half the state, from the Navajo Nation in the northeast corner to just north of Tucson in the south. As big as it is, though — the tenth-largest in the country — her district covers mostly rural areas. To have any hope of seizing McCain's seat and helping Democrats take back the Senate, Kirkpatrick needs the backing of the state's Latino communities, especially those surrounding Café Royale.

Sitting around a coffee table, where plates of cookies go untouched, Kirkpatrick tells the group — a dozen well-dressed, well-coiffed business-owners and local politicians — a parable of sorts, describing the kind of determination she believes is necessary to get people to the polls. In Kirkpatrick's 2014 campaign for the U.S. Congress, a Navajo organizer arrived to pick up a rural family to vote early. But the Navajo family had other plans that day — slaughtering a sheep. As she tells the story, Kirkpatrick, a slender woman with bangs and shoulder-length brunette hair, pauses for emphasis: "She said, 'Don't worry, I'll slaughter the sheep. You go vote.'"

The story clearly resonates with her listeners. "We look forward to having you turn the state over to blue," Jose Diego Espinoza, a state legislator, tells her.

"We're going to do it! It's time. It's time."

Sitting around the table, laughing and strategizing, the group is optimistic that Latino anger over Donald Trump will expand voter turnout and help Democrats in races all the way down the ballot. Were Democrats to take back the U.S. Senate and keep the White House, this community could see a boost in federal funding for everything from public transit to education. Such a victory also could help Democrats win local and statewide races and improve chances for ballot initiatives they support, such as increasing school funding and the minimum wage. Several of the locals at the table are running for office: state Legislature, city councils, local school boards.

Everyone here knows, though, that victory will only be possible if Latinos do what they have never done before: Register and vote in numbers that echo their swelling position in the state, where 31 percent identified as Hispanic or Latino in 2015's census.

Arizona's changing demographics, with Latinos making up an ever-larger share of the population, herald an likely shift in the electorate from red to purple and then, eventually, blue, following the pattern of California, Colorado, Nevada and New Mexico. This election cycle, however, Republican candidate Donald Trump may be accelerating that trend.

Trump's antipathy toward immigrants, his plan to build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico and his ceaseless insulting of minorities have stirred up many Latinos. State data show a significant increase in voter registration, with Democrats up by 7 percent and Republicans by nearly 5 percent. In Maricopa County, the state's largest, 70,000 more people are registered as Democrats than in 2012, while Republicans are up 50,000. The big question for Kirkpatrick and others will be whether backlash to Trump (and his local doppelgänger, Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio) will translate into votes on Election Day.

A BATTLE OF POLITICAL WILLS

Most Republicans here are confident they'll retain their long-held dominance in the state. At a late-summer campaign event in Chandler, southwest of Phoenix, McCain scoffed at predictions of a Democratic takeover. "In 2012 and 2008, there was all this conversation about how Arizona could go Democrat, and obviously it did not," he said. "It won't this time."

That may be true. A number of institutions are set up to preserve Republican dominance. One big difference between Arizona and other purpling Western states is that its political and economic institutions are largely designed to resist influence from Mexico and its immigrants. The state's election laws, for example, make it harder for Latinos to be elected to local and state office: Because Arizona voters elect two representatives to the state Legislature from relatively large districts, minorities are at a disadvantage. If the districts were smaller, Latinos would be in the majority more often and could send more representatives to the Statehouse.

"There are few institutions (in Arizona) that can harness the political will of the lower socio-economic strata of the Hispanic community," says Stephen A. Nuño, associate professor at the University of Northern Arizona. "Hispanics don't have a whole lot of institutions they can use to mobilize, and that is not a mistake."

Arizona is also a right-to-work state, so labor unions have not played a big role in supporting Democratic candidates. Voter registration happens through the Department of Motor Vehicles, so Republicans, who tend to be more affluent, register to vote without thinking about it, while low-income minorities without cars might not ever be asked to register.

Traditionally, the national Democratic Party hasn't paid much attention to Arizona, considering it a lost cause. That may be changing, however: Latinos remain underrepresented in the state Legislature, holding 21 percent of seats for 31 percent of the



state's population, but that's up from only 14 percent in 2009. Seeing an opportunity, Hillary Clinton's campaign sent staff to the state in August, and, in September, she was polling even with Trump.

Consequently, the Trump factor has some GOP leaders worried. Even one of the state's top Republicans, Sen. Jeff Flake, believes Trump's perceived racism and anti-immigrant policies will make it harder for down-ticket Republicans to win their elections. He's repeatedly appealed to Trump to drop his anti-immigrant rhetoric and proposals, and has refused to endorse him. Republicans conducted an in-house "autopsy" after the last election and came up with suggestions for broadening their appeal to an increasingly diverse nation. "And we're doing none of them," Flake told me when I interviewed him in August. "We're going in the other direction, in terms of inclusivity."

"HIT THEM IN THE HEART"

Despite any unintentional boost she might get from Trump, Kirkpatrick has

her work cut out for her. Incumbent senators rarely lose. McCain, 80, still has a large following in the state and a huge campaign chest. A September Marist poll for NBC and *Wall Street Journal* had McCain leading by 57 percent to 38 percent among likely voters.

Latino turnout in past elections has been stubbornly low. In 2014, Latinos represented 12 percent of all votes cast statewide, although they make up 21 percent of eligible voters and 31 percent of the state's population. In the last presidential election, in 2012, Latinos made up 18 percent of all the state's voters, still an underrepresentation.

But there are small signs that encourage the Latino leaders gathered at the Café Royale: Turnout was up for the late August primary in Latino areas. "This is the year to drive people to action from the presidential race down to the local races," Anna Tovar, 42, a former state senator and the former vice mayor of nearby Tolleson, says later. "Trump will rouse the Latino turnout; the vast majority is vehe-

mently opposed to him." (In August, Tovar won the mayoral race for Tolleson, ousting a man who had held the job for 22 years.)

Lorenzo Sierra, the organizer of the café event, believes Trump's "bigotry" and his anti-immigrant policies propelled more Latinos to the polls. An Avondale city councilman, vice chair of the Arizona Latino Chamber of Commerce and a successful business consultant, Sierra is impatient for Latinos to exert their latent electoral might. He has been busy this summer — as have many pro-Democratic groups — registering voters and canvassing to encourage registered voters to get to the polls. "We're getting there," he told me. "This might be the tipping-point election."

Kirkpatrick isn't counting on being swept into the Senate by anger over Trump. She's determined to woo voters by demonstrating her commitment to improving their lives. She tells them she recently won funding to improve school buses for the Navajo Nation and expand Interstate 10 between Tucson

Protesters rally around giant balloons of Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump and Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio in late August in Phoenix, where Trump was speaking about immigration.

DAVID JOLKOVSKI



Ann Kirkpatrick, front left, greets Isela Blanc, Democratic candidate for the Arizona Legislature, during a “Latinos for Ann” event in Phoenix. Kirkpatrick needs the backing of Latinos to win the Arizona Senate seat John McCain has held for three decades.

DAVID JOLKOVSKI

and Phoenix. And, most crucially to her election bid, she supports immigration reform, including the DREAM Act, which would provide a path to citizenship for undocumented children brought to the U.S. by their parents.

At the table, Mariana Sandoval, a paralegal in a sharp black suit, hair fastened in a neat bun, tells Kirkpatrick that Latino communities need better public transportation to connect them to jobs and education. Sandoval, who is running for a seat on the Agua Fria Union

High School District board, says that her neighborhood, for instance, has no bus, so she has to drive or get a ride to the bus she takes downtown. Her son has to drive to his classes at the community college.

Such traditional Democratic policies, mixed with a Trump bump, could help Kirkpatrick and others. But politics-as-usual may hurt them. Kirkpatrick expects to be far outspent this election by McCain and by dark money from corporations and individuals that would like to see McCain keep his seat and the Senate

stay in Republican hands. As of late August, the race ranked as having the fifth-largest amount of dark money spent in any Senate race (*see story and graphic below*). It was also the most lopsided: Nearly \$1.3 million was spent in favor of McCain and \$300,000 went to negative ads against Kirkpatrick. Kirkpatrick received no dark money, according to the Center for Responsive Politics analysis.

More dark money was spent against her in the 2014 election than any other candidate for the U.S. House of Repre-

The shadow following Western races

Nevada and Arizona attract the most ‘dark money’ this election

After three decades, Senate Democratic Minority Leader Harry Reid is retiring, leaving a coveted Senate seat open in Nevada, one of the West’s battleground states. It’s a pivotal race: Should Republican Joe Heck be elected, he would strengthen the GOP’s Senate majority and bring a recently blue Nevada back into the Republican fold. If Democratic contender Christine Cortez Masto wins, she would be the first Latina ever elected to the Senate. The contest is also a close one. Cortez Masto has been trailing only slightly behind Heck, according to polls by *The New York Times* and *FiveThirtyEight*, a political blog that tracks and weighs national rankings. By mid-September, nearly \$4 million of so-called “dark money” contributions — which flow through a loophole-ridden system that allows tax-exempt nonprofits and super PACs to influence politics without disclosing the identities of their donors — had poured into the race.

Nationwide, such anonymous campaign contributions are on the rise. In 2012, more than \$308 million in dark money was paid out, compared to

\$102.4 million in 2008. Nearly 60 percent of the money donated to the top 10 Senate races in 2014 was dark, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, which tracks dark money. This September, anonymous spending is 10 times higher than it was at the same point in 2012.

That’s becoming more common in the West’s battleground states: Nevada, Colorado and increasingly purple Arizona, which has long been a conservative stronghold. Nevada’s District 3 House race, between Republican Danny Tarkanian and Democrat Jacky Rosen, has attracted more than \$1.8 million in anonymous funding, for example. The race for Arizona’s Senate seat, between Republican incumbent John McCain and Democratic House Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, has received more than \$1.5 million, and Colorado’s Senate race has brought in nearly \$120,000. And these contests are just a sampling of Western elections that are attracting dark money. On the national scale, candidates in the West and their respective races are sprinkled among the top for garnering the most shadow funds. **PAIGE BLANKENBUEHLER**

sentatives, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. It was the fourth-most expensive House race in history. Yet Kirkpatrick won, in part because the turnout in her district was 10 percent higher than the state average. Her secret? “You meet people where their needs are,” Kirkpatrick tells the Latino leaders at Café Royale. If they need child care or a ride to the polls, you provide it.

Seated to her left, Tommy Morales, a longtime local politician and former mayor of Avondale, injects a sober note. He warns Kirkpatrick that she must do more to court Latino voters if she hopes to win support and get people to the polls. “I truly believe our culture requires and demands that you hit them in the heart,” he says. “If you don’t touch them, they’re not going to vote for you.”

Kirkpatrick clearly knows this. She stresses the similarities she shares with Morales and others in background and values. Kirkpatrick, who is 66, attended reservation schools in a poor part of Arizona, worked her way through college and law school, raised a family and started her own business. As a new grandmother, she understands the Latino communities’ need for better public transportation, higher-paying jobs and better schools.

The Trump factor allows her to further leverage her platform, when it comes to advertising, for example. A recent YouTube ad in Spanish ties McCain to Trump’s anti-immigrant policies, showing clips of McCain first endorsing Trump and then walking at the border and telling a Border Patrol agent: “Complete the dang fence.”

“HORRIFIED BY HIS COMMENTS”

Trump’s vitriol is having other purpling effects. It’s pushed some people out of the Republican Party altogether, Bill Mundell among them. He was horrified to see Trump’s rise in the race for his party’s nomination. Mundell, who at 63 has thick gray hair and a youthful face, was an elected and appointed Republican politician for decades — in the state Legislature and on the Corporation Commission, which regulates electric companies and

other utilities. His wife, Barbara Rodriguez Mundell, was the presiding judge of Maricopa County Superior Court and Arizona’s first Latina judge. She’s also a third-generation Mexican-American, so Bill was personally offended when Trump called Mexicans “rapists” and accused Jeb Bush of being “soft” on illegal immigrants because his wife is from Mexico.

He was especially angry and alarmed when Trump defended supporters who had brutally beaten a homeless Latino

Trump’s bigotry resonates deeply with Mundell, because for years, his wife and their family were harassed by Trump’s ally, Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who is under federal investigation for intimidating and wrongly arresting Latinos and other minorities. Mundell claims that Arpaio and a now-disbarred county attorney, Andrew Thomas, investigated Barbara Mundell on bogus charges, claiming she was involved in a criminal racketeering scheme. (In a statement, Barbara



Bill Mundell, right, and running mate Tom Chabin deliver their nominating petitions for the board of the Arizona Corporation Commission in May. Mundell, a longtime Republican politician, became a Democrat in response to actions and comments by Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump and one of his supporters, Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. COURTESY BILL MUNDELL FOR CORPORATION COMMISSION

man in Boston, where one of Mundell’s daughters goes to college. One of the assailants later told police: “Donald Trump was right, all these illegals need to be deported.”

Not long after that, Mundell was on vacation with his family in Cody, Wyoming, when he came across a gigantic billboard with Trump’s face and the slogan “Make America Great Again.” “That was the straw that broke the camel’s back,” he told me. “I thought, ‘I don’t belong in this party any more.’”

called the allegations “false, frivolous and slanderous” and an “attempt to intimidate the judiciary.”

Unmarked Ford Crown Victorias were posted outside the family’s home, and even followed Mundell’s elderly father-in-law round town. Mundell remembers the pain of having to warn his daughter that their house might be searched and her bedroom ransacked, a tactic that Arpaio had used on others. The Mundells ultimately settled with

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\$2,028,671

Joe Heck
R-Nev.
Senate



\$1,520,364

Catherine Cortez Masto
D-Nev.
Senate

Among Joe Heck’s shadow funders, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a conservative nonprofit, has spent almost \$2 million in Nevada’s Senate race in favor of him.

← The League of Conservation Voters, an environmental nonprofit, has spent \$710,000, and Majority Forward, a group linked to Harry Reid, has paid \$251,000 attacking Heck, Catherine Cortez Masto’s opponent.

\$1,253,657

John McCain
R-Ariz.
Senate

\$794,772

Michael Roberson
R-Nev.
House District 3

\$793,487

Danny Tarkanian
R-Nev.
House District 3

\$300,150

Ann Kirkpatrick
D-Ariz.
Senate

Dark money
The Western House and Senate candidates who have attracted the most dark money (including dollars spent against them)*

\$282,879

Michele Fiore
R-Nev.
House District 3

\$157,036

Helene Schneider
D-Calif.
House District 24

\$118,252

Cory Gardner
R-Colo.
Senate

\$99,946

Steve Pearce
R-N.M.
House District 2

\$72,787

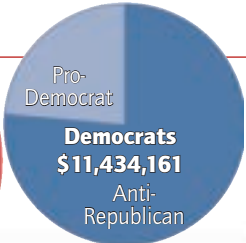
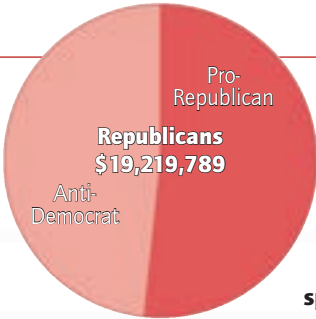
Morgan Carroll
D-Colo.
House District 6

\$44,417

Michael Bennet
D-Colo.
Senate

\$21,272

Patty Murray
D-Wash.
Senate



Total dark money spent on Western races and how it was spent

* **WEB EXTRA** For more on dark money and a breakdown of dollars spent for and against candidates, see hcne.ws/dark-money, see hcne.ws/dark-money.

An electrician installs rooftop solar in Arizona, where the state's largest supplier of electricity is under federal investigation for its alleged role in influencing politics.

MATT YORK/AP FILE PHOTO

Citizens Divided

What dark money spending looks like on the ground in today's elections

Dark money, by its nature, is hard to detect. But its effects on our nation's elections and how we're governed are becoming increasingly visible. Take, for example, a video that circulated recently on social media in Arizona.

It opens with a Republican member of Arizona's Corporation Commission meeting the head of a GOP environmental group at a coffee shop to talk about "blue-collar solar." The commissioner, Tom Forese, appears with Paul Walker, executive director of the group, ConservAmerica. Walker tells Forese that "Wall Street sharks" control rooftop solar and that only affluent customers can afford solar panels, while low-income customers pay more than their fair share for the grid. A better approach, he declares, is to install solar panels owned by Arizona Public Service.

When Robert Burns, a fellow Republican on the commission, saw the video this summer, he was astonished. Here was a fellow commissioner advocating a program the commission would likely rule on, since Arizona Public Service, or APS, had proposed raising rates for consumers. "It just didn't smell right," Burns told me in August.

ConservAmerica says it paid for the video with money from its usual donors, and not from APS. Yet the fact that Forese was brazen enough to appear in the video despite the appearance of a conflict of interest shows how dark money has altered the atmosphere at the commission.

Burns was outraged, as were local reporters and watchdogs, in part because the commission was already in turmoil over allegations that APS has attempted to influence what is supposed to be an even-handed government commission. Furthermore, Forese was one of two people elected to the commission in 2014, after APS spent \$3 million to attack Democratic commissioners who supported rooftop solar.



APS, a monopoly and the state's largest supplier of electricity, is currently under federal investigation for its alleged role in influencing statewide elections, including the commission seats, as is APS' parent company, Pinnacle West Capital Corp. But this case and others show just how difficult tracking election spending has become.

These days, it can be impossible to know who is behind a successful advertisement that tarnishes one candidate or praises another. That's due in large part to the 2010 Supreme Court decision, *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, which held that corporations can legally hide political donations. Since then, outside spending on elections by corporations and interest groups has skyrocketed. Not only that, but the public seems to have quickly accepted the new reality.

"They accept it as part of the normal process," says Patrick Murray, director of Monmouth University's polling institute. "The public's sense is that it's going on on both sides of the aisle."

ONE OF ONLY 13 PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSIONS in the United States whose members are elected, Arizona's Corporation Commission was set up to protect

consumers from unreasonable rate hikes. It's a separate branch of government, not beholden to the governor or Legislature. It regulates electric companies, tap-water providers, pipelines, telecommunications and other utilities, and oversees the quality of service and the rates provided by utilities, most of which are monopolies.

In 2006, amid rising concerns about climate change, the commission approved a standard that requires electric utilities to generate 15 percent of their power from renewable resources by 2025. Since then, rooftop solar has become much more affordable and popular. That has challenged the business model of electric companies, which rely on increases in electricity use to generate profits. "Rooftop solar energy's emergence creates an unprecedented challenge for electric utilities, which are not generally accustomed to facing competition in their markets," says Troy Rule, a law professor at Arizona State University.

Rule recently presented an analysis to the commission called *Buying Power: Utility Dark Money and the Battle Over Rooftop Solar*. In it, he wrote: "State (public utility commissions) have vigorously protected most electric utilities from

Please see Citizens Divided, page 20

"Restrictions on such campaign contributions are crucial to preserving the integrity and effectiveness of utility regulatory systems. Unfortunately, as a legal matter, this no-brainer question appears to be open for debate."

—Troy Rule, law professor, Arizona State University

Purpling, continued from page 17

the county for \$500,000 for the harassment. Yet no other Republican defended his wife throughout the ordeal, Mundell says. And there was a bigger lesson: “If they could do that to a person of my wife’s stature, can you imagine what they could do to people who didn’t have the ability to fight back?”

The moment of truth came in September 2015: Mundell sat down with his laptop in his house in Paradise Valley, Arizona, north of Phoenix, and changed his registration to the Democratic Party. This was a huge decision after his long career as a Republican politician: He had chaired the Arizona Legislature’s Energy, Environment and Natural Resources Committee and served nine years as chairman of the Arizona Corporation Commission, until he reached his term limit. “When I pushed that button, it was a significant moment in my life,” Mundell said, during a late summer interview at a coffee shop near his home.

After the news of his switch broke, some state Democratic leaders tried to

recruit him to rejoin the Arizona Corporation Commission, this time for their party. He had been following news stories about how, in 2014, the state’s biggest electric company, Arizona Public Service, surreptitiously funneled millions of dollars to support the election of Republicans to the commission and oust Democrats who supported a faster transition to cleaner renewable energy (*see story, page 18*). Still, after all his family had suffered, he hesitated. “I thought I had retired from politics,” he said. “But I couldn’t sit back idly and watch what was going on at the commission. I was disgusted and disheartened.” In February, he jumped into the race. “This is going to be a fascinating election to watch in Arizona, because people are fired up,” Mundell said. “We’re right on the cusp of turning purple and ultimately blue.”

“NOT AN EGOMANIAC”

As Latinos expand as a portion of the West’s population, candidates who are perceived as racist and anti-immigrant will have an increasingly difficult time (*see story, page 6*).

Demographers project that by 2030, minorities will make up more than 40 percent of the electorate in both Arizona and Alaska. Nevada’s electorate is projected to plunge from 62 percent white in 2016 to just 48 percent in 2032. Even Utah’s electorate would be nearly a quarter non-white by 2032, according to projections by a group of Washington, D.C., think tanks (*see graphic, page 21*).

The implications of such a shift are huge. Assuming high Latino turnout (a big assumption, granted), Colorado could become a solidly blue state in 2016, and Arizona move from Republican red to a Republican-leaning swing state, and then to blue by 2028. Arizona’s electorate has already seen a boom in eligible Latino voters, from 796,000 in 2008 to 1.3 million in 2016.

How all of that will play out remains to be seen, but Trump’s campaign continues to exert a palpable influence, from the national to the state level, and even in some local issues, from mayoral contests to school funding initiatives. One of the most glaring examples is the possible unseating of Arpaio, who has held his

Field organizer Eduardo Vasquez and volunteer Yvonne L. Chavez try to register voters outside of Food City in Avondale, Arizona, a heavily Latino Phoenix suburb. DAVID JOLKOVSKI



Citizens Divided, continued from page 18

competition for more than half a century, actively preventing rival utilities from distributing retail electricity within clearly drawn exclusive service territories.” So it’s no surprise that commissions in Arizona, Nevada and elsewhere are being asked to protect electric companies from the kind of competition rooftop solar represents.

While there’s nothing new about utilities trying to influence their regulators, *Citizens United* opened the door for utilities to play a big role in funding elections. In Arizona, APS is alleged to have bankrolled TV ads that aired thousands of times attacking a pro-solar energy commissioner who was seeking re-election. One accused Democratic commissioner Sandra Kennedy of voting to “hurt” Arizona families by supporting an increase in sales taxes.

Burns believes that APS, through its alleged spending, had “undue influence” over the 2014 election, and potentially over his commission. Even before the election, APS had spent millions on a public relations campaign to stymie a study on alternative energy. After the 2014 elections, the new commission — without its two former Democratic members — killed the study.

So when Burns learned about how much dark money had been injected into the race, he first asked and then ordered APS to disclose its campaign spending. The company refused. APS spokeswoman Anna Haberlein refused to comment on its reasons, saying, “We don’t discuss active litigation.”

Burns, who is 78 and running for re-election, requested that all utilities stay out of the 2016 election. All the major ones except APS agreed. Burns then

wanted to hire a lawyer to go to the company’s headquarters, dig through its files and pry out documents showing exactly how much money APS spent in the 2014 election cycle, how it was spent and what APS was attempting to achieve.

In mid-August, the commissioners — all five are Republicans — met to consider hiring the attorney. Forese joined by telephone. Led by Chairman Tom Little, also elected in 2014, the commission rejected the idea, but not before Little accused Burns of impugning its integrity through a public campaign against APS.

Burns urged his colleagues to reconsider, arguing that big, undisclosed campaign spending influences elections and “has the potential of corrupting the commission.” His opponents countered that hiring a lawyer would waste taxpayer money, and they reminded him that *Citizens United* allowed a company to hide its campaign spending. Little bitterly chastised Burns for his requests that utilities not put money into the election, saying it was shocking behavior for a Republican. “Your letter basically asked those companies to abandon their First Amendment rights,” Little said.

Burns, whose long, distinguished career as a Republican politician includes a stint as president of the state Senate, was undaunted. He subpoenaed APS to disclose its spending in the 2014 election. In September, APS filed a lawsuit asking a state superior court to invalidate the subpoenas. APS and Pinnacle West said they would release some documents by Burns’ deadline. However, citing *Citizens United*, they also threatened to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, to defend their right not to disclose spending. It’s impossible to say now whether the case would get that far.

STILL, THIS LEGAL BATTLE COULD TEST the limits of the *Citizens United* decision. If it does eventually get to the Supreme Court, the outcome could depend on who wins the presidential election and chooses a new justice to replace the conservative Antonin Scalia, who died in February.

Some legal scholars argue that APS is mistaken in asserting that *Citizens United* gives it license to secretly sway elections. “Particularly as the popularity of rooftop solar energy increases, legal uncertainty regarding the extent to which utilities can indirectly fund their own regulators’ election campaigns is becoming a growing problem,” Rule wrote. “Restrictions on such campaign contributions are crucial to preserving the integrity and effectiveness of utility regulatory systems. Unfortunately, as a legal matter, this no-brainer question appears to be open for debate.”

Until the courts untangle the mess, elections for public utility commissions remain ripe for influence from electric companies.

“Every additional kilowatt-hour of electricity that a customer-owned rooftop solar system generates is one less kilowatt-hour that the system’s owner must purchase from its utility through the grid,” Rule wrote.

Of course, corporation commissions aren’t the only races impacted by *Citizens United*. Outside spending has escalated dramatically this election cycle because corporations and interest groups see the Supreme Court’s ruling as a green light. As of early September, total outside spending for the 2016 election had exceeded \$660 million, more than twice the \$289 million spent by this point in the 2012 election, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.

THIS TIME AROUND, the only transparent evidence of big outside spending is on Burns’ behalf: SolarCity Corp. has been advertising in his support. Unlike the alleged APS spending, SolarCity discloses its spending, and the commission does not directly regulate solar installers.

Burns got the most votes in the Aug. 30 Republican primary. The two Democrats in the race, Bill Mundell and Tom Chabin — both advocates of rooftop solar and renewable energy — are running under the state’s clean election law. After raising 2,000 \$5 donations, their campaigns each received about \$250,000 in public money, and they aren’t allowed to raise other funds.

Burns believes the controversy over APS’ dark money could help him, Mundell and Chabin fill three commission seats. “When I’m out campaigning, people come up and say, ‘You guys are bought and paid for,’” Burns told his fellow commissioners in August. He believes voters are beginning to understand the utility’s dark-money efforts to influence regulators. The question is whether enough of them will see the light by Election Day.

ELIZABETH SHOGREN

The Arizona Corporation Commission’s August meeting, where Commissioner Robert Burns, right, advocated hiring an attorney to determine whether outside influence was a factor in commission decisions. Fellow commissioners Andy Tobin, Chairman Doug Little and Bob Stump, pictured from left, voted down the proposal.

CAPITOL MEDIA SERVICES
PHOTO BY HOWARD FISCHER



position for 24 years.

On a blisteringly hot Saturday morning outside Café Royale, voters from around the region gathered to meet Paul Penzone, Arpaio's opponent.

Lorenzo Sierra, the Avondale city councilman, who is also a spokesman for the Clinton campaign, was there, having left a stay-cation with his wife at a Phoenix-area resort to attend the meet-and-greet. One of the first faces he recognized was a bit of a surprise: Sophia Johnson, a longtime Republican activist who ran for the state Legislature two years ago and represented her district at the GOP convention this summer.

A few days after the event, Johnson posted a photo of herself and Penzone on her public Facebook page with the note: "Vote for Paul Penzone for Maricopa County Sheriff!" She says the posting elicited some "nasty" comments from other Republicans. Despite her support for Penzone, she hesitates to say much about it, and she even congratulated Arpaio after his win in the primary.

But other prominent Republicans have been very outspoken in their support for Penzone. Former Arizona Attorney General Grant Woods, a Republican, is a co-chair of Penzone's campaign. Woods, who also supported Penzone in a bid against Arpaio four years ago, introduced his candidate at a recent press conference in August, saying: "We haven't heard or seen the truth when it comes to enforcing the laws protecting our families in a long time. ... We need a competent, serious person to protect us ... not an egomaniac."

Arpaio is a Trump stalwart, warming up crowds at Trump rallies around the country, including a late-summer immigration speech at the Phoenix Convention Center that drew 7,500 people. "We've got the greatest guy probably in the world that knows how to make a deal," Arpaio, standing in front of a row of American flags, told the roaring crowd. "He's not going to give away the United States of America." He credited Trump for making illegal immigration a campaign issue, asserted that he won't be "politically correct" when he decides whom to lock up, and declared that Trump will build a wall between the U.S. and Mexico and get Mexico to pay for it.

Penzone, who lost by 10 percentage points in 2012, is looking better this time around; one independent poll out in August showed him up by 5 points, which, given the margin of error, puts the candidates in a virtual tie. Since 2012, the news has been full of reports about lawsuits against Arpaio for illegally detaining and harassing Latinos and others. Penzone has raised a lot more money than last time, but his war chest is a tiny fraction of Arpaio's \$11.3 million.

Penzone's campaign has seen supporters rally, including a mysterious mass mailing on Penzone's behalf. One flier, which pictures Arpaio holding a bucket of money, accuses the sheriff of



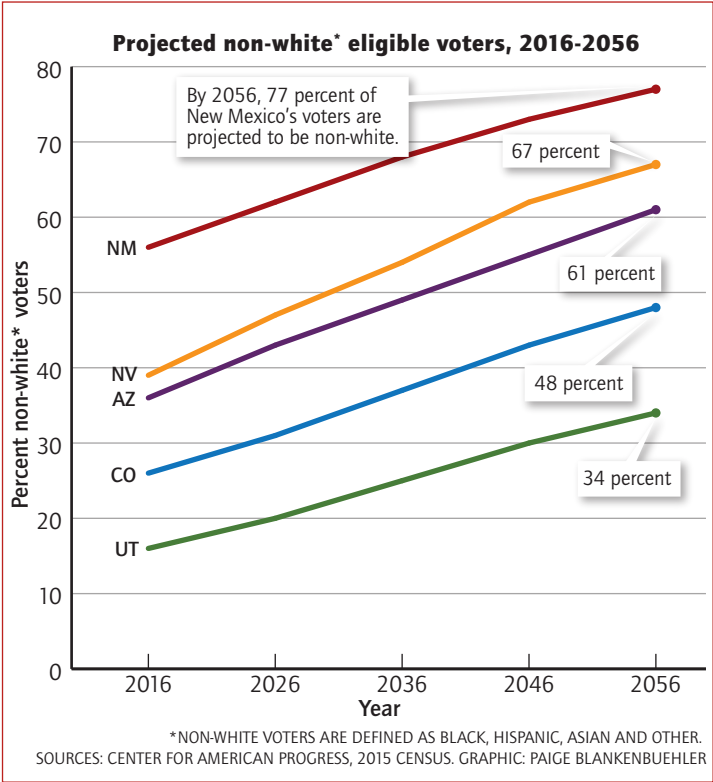
A voter leaves after casting her ballot in Arizona's primary election in Phoenix in March. MATT YORK/ASSOCIATED PRESS

"using our money to clean up his messes, instead of keeping us safe." The group is called Maricopa Strong, but Stacy Pearson, Penzone's spokeswoman, says the campaign does not know who is involved in it. Still, the support, she says, is an indication of the difference between now and the last election, "when the cavalry never came."

In this race, as in others, there's no guarantee. And yet, here in a state that has been red since 1952, when Dwight Eisenhower was elected president, there's surprising momentum behind the candidacies of Kirkpatrick, Mundell and Penzone. Could Arizona be on the edge of a political metamorphosis? If Democrats pull off some or all of these wins, anger over Arpaio and Trump will clearly have played a significant role.

Still, a permanent shift to Democratic dominance in Arizona is unlikely to result from this election. Most statewide officeholders and both branches of the state Legislature will remain Republican. Democrats will have to work much harder to better organize themselves and motivate Latino voters to exercise their long-dormant political muscle. Yet despite, or perhaps because of, the strange turns and divisive words of this year's races, the 2016 election has boosted the morale of Democrats here, giving them a taste of the future — one in which they are not only competitive, but maybe, just maybe, dominant. □

This story was funded with reader donations to the High Country News Research Fund.



Correspondent Elizabeth Shogren writes from Washington, D.C.
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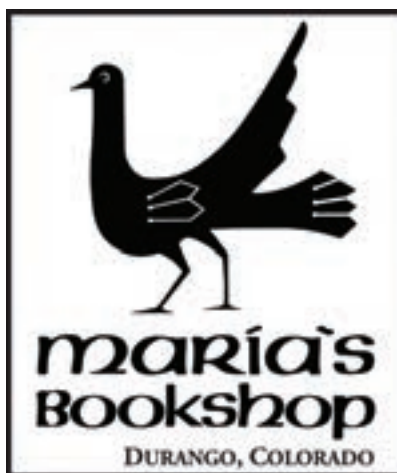
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1. Publication Title: High Country News
2. Publication No.: 0191-5657
3. Filing Date: Sept. 16, 2016
4. Issue Frequency: Biweekly, 22 times per year, skipping one cycle each calendar quarter.
5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 22
6. Annual Subscription Price: \$37, individual; \$47, institutional
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor Publisher: Paul Larmer, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428; Managing Editor: Brian Calvert, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
10. Owner: High Country News, P.O. Box 1090, Paonia, CO 81428
11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None
12. Tax status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes: Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months
13. Publication Title: High Country News
14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: v48.16 Sept. 19, 2016
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation
 - Avg. no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months/No. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
 - a. Total No. Copies 24,402/30,486
 - b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)
 1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions 26,503/28,692
 2. Paid In-County Subscriptions 0/0
 3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution 361/280
 4. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS 28/26
 - c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation 26,892/28,998
 - d. Free Distribution by Mail
 1. Outside-County 1,008/1,028
 2. In-County 0/0
 3. Other Classes 0/0
 4. Outside the Mail 91/9
 - e. Total Free Distribution 1,099/1,037
 - f. Total Distribution 27,991/30,035
 - g. Copies Not Distributed: Office Use, Leftovers, Spoiled 270/350
 - h. Total 28,261/30,385
 - i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation 96.0%/97.0%
16. Electronic Copy Circulation
 - a. Paid Electronic Copies 1,832/1,917
 - b. Total Paid Print + Electronic Copies 28,724/30,915
 - c. Total Print Distribution+Paid Electr. Copies 29,823/31,952
 - d. Percent Paid (Print and Electronic) 96.0% 97.0%
17. This Statement of Ownership is printed in the vol 48.17 Oct. 3, 2016, issue of this publication.

I certify that the statements made by me are correct and complete.
s/Paul Larmer, publisher, Sept. 19, 2016

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Get Into The Wild

An Arctic grayling fin shows the iridescence of the fish. It has recovered with help from landowners working to keep it off the endangered species list.

CURTIS FRY/CC FLICKR



OPINION BY
TED WILLIAMS

Before releasing the fish, I held it for a full minute in the icy flow of Yellowstone National Park's Gibbon River. Its sail-like dorsal fin was trimmed with orange and splashed with spots and streaks of red, white, green, turquoise and neon blue. Its flanks glowed with the pink and silver of a Rocky Mountain sunrise. It was an Arctic grayling.

This one had dropped down from Grebe Lake, meaning that it was adfluvial, or lake-dwelling. The fluvial, or river-dwelling, form was extirpated from the park, Michigan and most everywhere in the West decades ago. Lake grayling are easily transplanted

outside their natural range, and after years of stocking are more common in high-mountain lakes than they were originally.

The park's river grayling were victims of the introduced alien trout that were flung around by the old Bureau of Sport Fisheries back in the days when "a fish was a fish," and its only perceived function was to bend a rod.

In 1936, the Michigan grayling, once so abundant that a city — Grayling — was named after it, went extinct, mostly as a result of logging. In the upper Missouri River watershed, which is largely private ranchland, river grayling have

been nearly lost to cattle grazing along streams, water withdrawals and alien trout.

Today, most managers understand that fish are wildlife, too, and they're working to keep imperiled species on the planet. For example, the National Park Service now obeys the 1916 Organic Act, which requires it to "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and wildlife ... (and) leave them unimpaired." That means not polluting water with alien fish and, in the few cases where it's possible, removing the invaders with a short-lived organic poison called rotenone.

New approaches are saving the Arctic grayling



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OTO BY MARK GÖCKE



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By 2014, Yellowstone Park had cleared alien trout from 35 miles of Grayling Creek, named before the natives were lost. In spring 2015, managers placed 110,000 fertilized grayling eggs from Montana's Big Hole River in instream incubators. By fall, the sites swarmed with 3-inch-long fluvial grayling, and last spring, 50,000 more eggs went in.

The public generally supports bringing back the grayling. But a local fishing group, the Wild Trout Conservation Coalition, passionately defends alien trout, firing off screeds to every major and minor politician, bureaucrat and reporter it can find contact info for. The group excoriates the park and recycles mythology about the rotenone formulations used to manage fish.

Rotenone is "highly toxic to humans and animals," it asserts. But rotenone doesn't harm anything with lungs, quickly dissipates, and when applied at 50 parts per billion, as it is in modern fisheries management, has never permanently affected an aquatic ecosystem — except to restore it.

Though grayling recovery has been more challenging in the upper Missouri River system, the results have been spectacular even there. Emma Cayer,

a biologist with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, reports that grayling numbers have tripled since 2000.

Recovery has been made possible by the Endangered Species Act — not because the fish has been listed, but because it hasn't. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service guarantees landowners immunity from prosecution for inadvertent "takings," should listing occur, provided that the landowner works to restore habitat. That work can include planting willows, installing fish screens and fish ladders, and fencing cows from riparian areas. Landowners also get technical and financial assistance from state and federal agencies and organizations like The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited. None of the ranchers I interviewed complained about expenses, and all expressed pride in their recovery work.

Based on this success, the Fish and Wildlife Service determined in 2014 that grayling in the contiguous states didn't warrant a listing as endangered, a decision applauded by virtually the entire environmental community. Two exceptions were the Center for Biological Diversity and Western Watersheds Project, neither of which is based in Wyoming or Montana. Despite multiple requests,

neither group has been a participant in working to recover grayling. Instead, they're suing to get grayling listed.

But the success of grayling recovery in the Big Hole and other Montana and Wyoming streams is further proof that the Endangered Species Act can work better as motivator than punishment, especially on private land.

"The plaintiffs think the incentive for landowners to work with us is gone because of the not-warranted (for listing) decision," declares Cayer. "We have the exact opposite view." Legal battles to get the fish listed have been ongoing since 1991, she explains, and no matter what happens with the current litigation, that won't change. But if listing happens, all participants in grayling recovery fear that landowners will throw up their hands and say, "What more can we do?" □

Ted Williams writes the "Recovery" column for The Nature Conservancy's online publication, Cool Green Science.

Writers on the Range is a syndicated service of High Country News, providing three opinion columns each week to more than 200 media outlets around the West. For more information, contact Betsy Marston, betsym@hcn.org, 970-527-4898.

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Issue Cover Date: November 14, 2016

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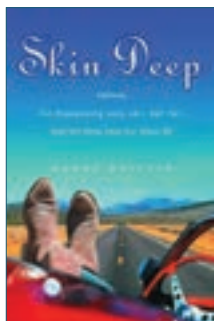


Photo of Tom Bell by Mark Harvey

A rough, tough life



Heavy: A Memoir of Wyoming, BMX, Drugs, and Heavy Fucking Music
J.J. Anselmi
327 pages, softcover:
\$15.95.
Rare Bird Books, 2016.



Skin Deep: Tattoos, the Disappearing West, Very Bad Men, and My Deep Love for Them All
Karol Griffin
304 pages, hardcover
Harcourt, 2003 (out of print)

We meet wild man Freddy Martinez, an acid-tripping biker, at the start of J.J. Anselmi's new book, *Heavy: A Memoir of Wyoming, BMX, Drugs, and Heavy Fucking Music*. But he's dead by the third page, setting a bleak tone for Anselmi's story of growing up in and eventually leaving a small high-desert mining town: Rock Springs, Wyoming.

"I had my first encounter with suicide when I was nine, and my dad's best friend, Freddy Martinez, shot himself with a twelve-gauge shotgun," Anselmi writes.

Martinez would work the nearby oilfields for eight or nine months at a time and then quit to blow his money on partying and travel until he was broke. Anselmi paints his life and death as products of the nauseating boom-and-bust cycle in which Rock Springs and its residents have always been trapped.

Another of Anselmi's father's close friends, Joey Hay, "looked like Dennis Hopper's character in *Easy Rider*." Hay led a turbulent life and shot himself, too.

"In the center of my brain, as well as my dad's, Freddy's, and Joey's, I imagine that there's a crumbling diorama of Rock Springs," Anselmi writes. "Cracks slither across roads and sidewalks, and paint peels off decrepit houses. Dust, tumbleweeds, and bits of human detritus, blown by wind, flit through town. Rust and dirt cover the Rock Springs Coal arch."

Suicide — Wyoming's rate is perennially among the highest in the nation — is just one among myriad confounding elements that Anselmi faces in Rock Springs. In eighth grade, deliberately rebelling against his father's stoner habits, he chooses a drug-free "straight-edge" lifestyle and embraces atheism, heavy metal music and bone-breaking BMX riding. In his late teens, though, Anselmi covers his skin with tattoos and joins his wayward peers in bingeing on alcohol, weed and LSD. Much of the book takes place in dingy bedrooms and basements, interspersed with forays into Rock Springs history: Anselmi's own grandfather, for example, who was investigated by *60 Minutes* for mob ties; the 1885 Rock Springs massacre, in which white railroad workers murdered 28 Chinese immigrants; the periodic appearance of sinkholes when abandoned mine shafts beneath Rock Springs yawn open like pits to hell.

In a way, *Heavy* seems like a sequel to another recollection of life in the underbelly of a small Wyoming town, Karol Griffin's memoir *Skin Deep: Tattoos, the Disappearing West, Very Bad Men, and My Deep Love for Them All*. Griffin inked her first customer as a tattoo artist in Laramie, Wyoming, in 1990, before Anselmi was in kindergarten. She was

old enough to have been his mother, and their books read like a two-part saga in which the reader witnesses how both trauma and resilience are passed from one generation of Wyoming misfits to the next.

Griffin has more fun and makes a much better rebel, engaging in wild romances with dangerous men and consid-

own story ended much too soon: She died in 2010 at the age of 47 from liver failure, leaving behind an adolescent son, whose father, last we knew from *Skin Deep*, was in prison. Anselmi, meanwhile, went on to earn a graduate degree and currently teaches at a community college in Minnesota.

Griffin's memoir begins with a clinical



Fans mosh during a hometown album release party for The-Front, a punk rock band, in Casper, Wyoming. RYAN DORGAN

ering herself an heiress to the Western outlaw tradition. Her friends and lovers carry guns, wear leather jackets, do jail stints, and are equally adept on a Harley or a horse. Griffin meets her first true love, Rick, as he receives a tattoo from her boss; it says "Mr. No Credit," a reference to Rick's cash-only drug business.

Griffin never loses her romantic view of the West, while Anselmi's vision remains unflinchingly dystopic. Each new coffee shop and subdivision seems like an encroachment on the land and lifestyle Griffin loves. But, she writes, "I stay (in Wyoming) because I know the outer limits of the hardness of this place, and because it's more beautiful in its severity than easier places I've seen." Unlike Anselmi, however, who never found a reason to stay, Griffin came from an easier place herself — a nurturing, stable, middle-class home. Her book ends with a paean to Western optimism, which she believes stems from "the connection between people and an unforgiving landscape, half hope and half faith about what people can survive. ..." But Griffin's

description of how to give a tattoo — the physiology involved, the equipment, the technique. *Heavy* ends in an actual clinic, where Anselmi has his tattoos removed by excision, a process that leaves grotesque scars. For both authors, their tattoos are tied to a sense of place. "Each one reminded me of who I was and where I was from," Anselmi writes. "In Wyoming, my tattoos were badass. In Austin and Denver, they made me feel like a white trash jerk." As he deconstructs his desperate search for identity — concluding that it was being an outsider in Rock Springs that prompted him to get tattooed — Anselmi suggests Wyoming brought out the worst in him.

This is an uncomfortable conclusion to an uncomfortable book, particularly for people who might bristle at its damning portrait of Rock Springs. But Anselmi's story is valuable for that very reason. Wyoming is struggling to retain its bright, creative young people. *Heavy* makes it painfully clear why so many of them leave.

BY NATHAN MARTIN

Vishnu the Sustainer

For Jim Merriman

It's a delicate spring evening on the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. Late-day sun bleeds on the canyon walls in a hundred shades of red, rust and gold; visitors crowd the railing at Mather Point and fiddle with cameras. A dozen blocky inner-canyon mountains throw shadows on the ancient, lit-up rock.

Far across the canyon to the northeast, the most prominent peak, Vishnu Temple, shimmers in the rich light. Arguably the most famous of the canyon's 130 named summits, Vishnu rises nearly 4,000 feet from its massive base near the Colorado River, narrowing to a tiny chunk of Kaibab limestone floating in the Arizona sky. I tried climbing the thing once, and failed.

That was in 1994, not long after I learned that my friend Jim had died in a 360-foot fall from Mather Point. The headline said, "Grand Canyon victim was trying to gather coins." The story read like this: A transient had been living in the woods near Mather Point, where tourists make wishes and toss coins across the safety rail. Park rangers had ticketed him in the past for climbing out to the rock where the coins land, but he returned again and again — until his luck ran out. The end.

Police hadn't found the dead man's next-of-kin, so his name was not in the paper. At first, I doubted that it was Jim. He was too good a climber to fall from a place he knew so well, and too proud to let tourists see him scramble after change. And I certainly didn't think he would be drunk. But he was.

The booze was 10 years behind Jim when we first met in 1991. A one-time street alcoholic, he had turned his life around — twice — to become that rare and dignified thing: a free man.

"I can't live in a box," he used to say. Getting sober had given him back the house, the job and the credit cards, but that stuff didn't mean much to him. "All I wanted was to be in the mountains or down some canyon. So I had to let it all go, you know?"

So he did. He lived out of a cheap backpack, finding homes across the West in bright and rocky places. Odd jobs bought beans and rice. The Grand Canyon was his winter camp that year.

We met on the rim trail near the tourist lodge where I worked back then. It was late November and snowing, but he wore just a T-shirt, a cheap windbreaker and cut-off Levi's. His legs were built for steep, lonely places. His beard was winter-colored and big enough to hide a bird's nest, his skin weathered like good boots.

We struck up a conversation and found we had the same basic addictions — to alcohol, wild places and solitude. I was 35 then, just back from the Wyoming Rockies and wondering if I would cut the last cord and finally disappear into mountains. Jim was 50, and had surrendered to wandering.

For the next couple of years, we would conduct our friendship in chance meetings on that trail, standing for an hour or two of talk or walking for miles while sun fire flared off the canyon walls.

Tonight, while the sun begins to drop and the tourists frame their photos, I'm

remembering those talks. Jim used to say that we should hit the backcountry together, maybe climb Vishnu Temple. I imagine what that might have been like. Deep in my memories, I don't notice the young man approach me.

"Excuse me, sir," he says. Our eyes meet. "Would you help me and my family?" I say yes. "We're here to spread my brother's ashes in the canyon. Would you film it for us?"

I follow him back to the overlook. His mother and two brothers stand next to the railing. They have come from North Carolina, she says, because her lost son loved this place.

"He passed five years ago. His name was Jacob." Her eyes are shining. "We came here on vacation when he was 15." When she hands me the camera, she takes my hands in hers, and looks straight into my eyes. "He was a beautiful boy." I nod.

She turns back toward the canyon and the setting sun. The brothers gather around her, they say a prayer. I push the button and a golden cloud of ash appears on the tiny screen. In the background, Vishnu Temple turns coppery in the dying light. The woman sobs, the sons wrap her in their arms.

When I hand back the camera she thanks me, then asks where my home is. Here, I say.

Then I point to Vishnu Temple. I tell her that in the Hindu trinity, Vishnu is known as the sustainer of all life. I tell her about my friend, Jim, and that I always remember him when I take this walk. I promise her that from now on when I stop at Mather Point, I will remember her son, too. □

Michael Wolcott works for Grand Canyon National Park.

Vishnu rises nearly 4,000 feet from its massive base near the Colorado River, narrowing to a tiny chunk of Kaibab limestone floating in the Arizona sky. I tried climbing the thing once, and failed.



ADAM SCHALLAU



HEARD AROUND THE WEST | BY BEN GOLDFARB

OREGON

Nothing seems to inspire vandalism quite like a prominent geologic formation on a parcel of public land. In 2013, dim-witted Boy Scout leaders toppled a 200-million-year-old boulder from its pedestal in Utah's Goblin Valley State Park; earlier this year, a graffiti artist going by the moniker "creepyttings" defaced rocks in seven national parks. Unfortunately, the punishment meted out to those dunderheads does not appear to have deterred copycat criminals at Cape Kiwanda, a rugged stretch of cliffs along Oregon's coast. In early September, around eight hooligans knocked over a beloved block of precariously perched sandstone known locally as the "Duckbill." Oregon State Parks initially believed the rock had tumbled on its own — until a vigilante drone pilot named David Kalas turned over footage of the vandals in action. "They were just standing on top of the rubble of the rock, laughing, smiling, giggling," the heroic Kalas told KATU News. "I just want them to learn a lesson, you know, because if they do this here they will probably do it elsewhere." Authorities continue to search for the barbarous rock-knockers.

WASHINGTON

What's warm, enormous and driving coastal ecosystems haywire? Time to get reacquainted with the dreaded Blob, the giant pool of bizarrely balmy water that showed up in the Northeast Pacific in late 2013 and has dominated ecological and meteorological headlines since. Among other eerie phenomena, the Blob has been implicated in fisheries closures, the appearance of California squid in Alaskan waters, and the mass deaths of marine life from sea lions to fin whales. Scientists suspect the warm patch is a product of high pressure and weak winds, which have failed to stir up cold water from the Pacific's depths. The patch appeared to dissipate this summer, leading fishermen and whale-huggers alike to hope for lasting normalcy. This month, however, University of Washington atmospheric scientist Cliff Mass reported on his blog that the Blob is back, baby. Some parts of the Pacific, Mass wrote, are now reaching 4 degrees Celsius —



COLORADO Sending us in the same direction.

DANIEL WILKINSON

that's more than 7 degrees Fahrenheit — above normal, and the federal government expects the anomaly to linger at least through December.

UTAH

Speaking of alarming aquatic aberrations, the Beehive State spent the summer coping with its own kind of watery disaster — "the largest documented algae bloom in Utah history," according to the *Salt Lake Tribune*. Although scientists are still trying to figure out the precise dynamics of the algal eruption, which turned Utah Lake a sickly olive green, nutrient-rich effluent from wastewater treatment plants is a prime suspect. Climate change, which may have helped heat up the lake's waters this summer, could be a factor, too. "This is not Mother Nature doing what Mother Nature does," Walt Baker, director of Utah's Division of Water Quality, told the *Tribune*. "There have been blooms before. But what we are seeing is unprecedented." Get ready for more blooms and blobs, now and in the future.

OREGON

Depending on whom you ask, wild horses are either majestic totems of the untamed West or hooved pests grazing public lands to death. One thing they won't be: surgically sterilized. That's

because the Bureau of Land Management has decided to drop a controversial experiment that would have tested three population control techniques on more than 200 animals at the Wild Horse Corral Facility in Hines, Oregon. One method in particular — the surgical removal of the ovaries of pregnant mares — drew the wrath of advocacy groups, which sued to block the procedure. Jennifer Best, assistant director of Friends of Animals, told the *Associated Press* that the BLM "has absolutely no authority whatsoever to experiment on wild horses with new and risky surgeries." Now the BLM will have to find another way to put the brakes on an equine explosion that has produced 67,000 grass-devouring wild horses and burros — 15 percent more than last year, and more than twice as many as federal managers say the West can support.

MONTANA

Watch out, mountain goats — there's a new top dog in Glacier National Park. Say a hearty "good girl" to Gracie, the border collie who's serving as the park's first-ever "Bark Ranger." Gracie's groan-worthy title belies her very serious job description: shooing away the pesky mountain goats that congregate around the Logan Pass parking lot, menacing tourists and slurping up poisonous antifreeze. Although Gracie is still in training — herding wild ungulates is a few notches more complicated than learning to sit and stay — precedent suggests she'll figure it out. In Waterton Lakes National Park, just across the Canadian border, patrol pups reduced dangerous conflicts with deer tenfold. To follow Gracie's progress, check out her Instagram account at @barkrangernps. No word yet on whether the goats have learned to distract the Bark Ranger with a well-thrown tennis ball.

WEB EXTRA For more from Heard around the West, see hcn.org.

Tips and photos of Western oddities are appreciated and often shared in this column. Write betsym@hcn.org or tag photos #heardaroundthewest on Instagram.



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“It occurred to me that **this city lot was not a blank canvas upon which I could paint my own version of a garden, but rather its own thriving, hybrid ecosystem.**”

Greg Gordon, in his essay, "If you can't beat the weeds, eat them," from *Writers on the Range*, hcn.org/wotr