

July 17, 2020

Opinion Editorial

FR: Montana Sheriffs

RE: Personal Responsibility Required to Keep Vulnerable Citizens Safe and Montana's Economy Open

Sheriffs take an oath to support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Montana. We will uphold our oath, protect public safety, and respond to our shared constituency through open communication and education as we continue to face the public health risks of COVID-19.

As leaders in your community and the elected officials who represent you and your constitutional rights, we want to ensure we are all doing our part to protect the vulnerable citizens in our state while also keeping Montana open and our private sector business partners thriving.

We all value the rights afforded to us through the constitution and the privileges we have as Montana citizens. In order to keep moving forward, we all have to do our part. Personal responsibility is the only way we can keep our vulnerable citizens safe and our economy open. We will continue to focus our efforts on education and encourage citizens to make public health and safety-related decisions based on your own personal circumstances and exposure to and interaction with vulnerable populations. Washing your hands, social distancing, avoiding large gatherings, and wearing masks are all ways to take personal responsibility.

The statewide face-covering order is a public health directive. The directive is not a mandate for law enforcement to issue citations and arrest violators. As your locally elected Sheriffs, we will educate the public about the Governor's mask directive. We urge you to take personal responsibility and be respectful of all Montana citizens.

Signed by:

Sheriffs Paul Craft (Beaverhead), John Colby (Blaine), Wynn Meehan (Broadwater), Ed Lester (Butte-Silver Bow), Neil Kittelmann (Carter), Jesse Slaughter (Cascade), Josh McQuillan (Carbon), Vern Burdick (Chouteau), Tony Harbaugh (Custer), Duane Anderson (Daniels), Ross Canen (Dawson), Trent Harbaugh (Fallon), Rick Vaughn (Fergus), Brian Heino (Flathead), Brian Gootkin (Gallatin), Clay Lammers (Garfield), Jamie Ross (Hill), Craig Doolittle (Jefferson), Don Bell (Lake), Leo Dutton (Lewis and Clark), Darren Short (Lincoln), Phil Fortner (Madison), Jon

Lopp (Meagher), TJ McDermott (Missoula), Brad Bichler (Park), Gavin Roselles (Powell), Keifer Lewis (Prairie), Steve Holton (Ravalli), John Dynneson (Richland), Allen Fulton (Rosebud), Jason Frederick (Roosevelt), Tom Rummel (Sanders), Heidi Visocan (Sheridan), Charles "Chip" Kem (Stillwater), Keith Van Setten (Teton), Donna Whitt (Toole), Tom Boyer (Valley), Mike Linder (Yellowstone)