

# **Joint Statement of No Confidence in the Wyoming Historical Society Executive Committee and the WHS Executive Director**

**May 13, 2025\***

\*Original document sent to WHS leadership and ‘With Copy To’ list on May 13, 2025 (101 signatures)  
Signature list updated May 31, 2025 (now 146 signatures)

**TO:** Beki Speas, Heidi McCullough, Dean King, and Nancy Tabb (Wyoming Historical Society Executive Committee members); Hailey Sorg, Greg Luhman, Terri Geissinger, and Korina Ike (WHS EC members appointed to the EC under bylaws violation); Alexandra (Aley) Philp (WHS executive director); Patrick Brady (WHS EC and ED legal counsel/Sundahl, Powers, Kapp & Martin, LLC); Stacy Rostad\*\* (ED legal counsel/Rostad Law, LLC)

\*\*Laramie attorney Stacy Rostad began representing Aley Philp in her official capacity as WHS ED on 05/28/25. This is in addition to Ms. Philp and the EC being represented by Cheyenne attorney Patrick Brady.

**WITH COPY TO:** Jasmine Morton and Tara Nethercott\*\*\* (Wyoming Historical Foundation legal counsel/Crowley Fleck PLLP); Samin Dadelahi (Wyoming Community Foundation); Greg Dixon, Christian Jorgensen, and Jennifer Rohrer (Hilltop Bank); Kelly Tegeler and Kerry Majhanovich (Tegeler & Associates); Dave Glenn (Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources); Sara Sheen (State of Wyoming Cultural Resources Division); Sara Davis (Wyoming State Archives); Renée Bovée (Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund); Abby Beaver (Wyoming State Library); Kevin Ramler (Wyoming State Museum); Cassandra Kvenild (University of Wyoming Libraries); Dr. Paul V.M. Flesher (UW American Heritage Center); Dr. Jeffrey Means (UW Department of History); Brigida Blasi and Bryce Mittelstadt (Wyoming History Day); Andrea Graham and Megan Stanfill (Alliance for Historic Wyoming); Shawn Reese (Wyoming Humanities Council); Cecily North-Rudow and Cindy Brown (Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists); and Christina Kuzmych (WPR Wyoming Stories Statewide Initiative)

\*\*\*Cheyenne attorney Tara Nethercott of Crowley Fleck PLLP has joined Jasmine Morton to represent the Wyoming Historical Foundation.

**We, the one hundred and forty-six (146) undersigned members of the Wyoming Historical Society (WHS) hereby express our collective Joint Statement of No Confidence in the WHS Executive Committee (EC) and the WHS Executive Director (ED).**

We find ourselves unable to support the current WHS EC and WHS ED due to the following actions that blatantly violate bylaws of the WHS, blatantly violate bylaws of the Wyoming Historical Foundation, and violate Wyoming State Statutes:

- **Critical bylaws violation: Operating without a quorum.** The EC conducted business and took action—including during meetings held in secret—despite having only four members, which is below the five-member quorum required by Article III Section 10. After four EC resignations and one forced resignation in late 2024 and early 2025, the remaining four-member EC should have immediately suspended operations and consulted the WHS Nominating Committee instead of proceeding on unspecified “legal advice and

consulting,” as admitted by ED Aley Philp when questioned at the WHS quarterly meeting on April 12, 2025.

- **Critical financial governance violation: Refusal to conduct required audit.** The current EC has repeatedly refused to conduct an audit, in direct violation of Article VIII Section 7. This puts the four EC members, the four EC members appointed under bylaws violation, and the ED at extreme risk of serious financial and legal consequences. For example, WHS Treasurer Heidi McCullough claimed at the April 12 quarterly meeting that a \$5,000 annual audit was “not anywhere in our budget.” That **(1)** directly contradicts the EC’s January 18, 2025, vote for an audit (that vote occurred with a quorum of seven members); and **(2)** completely ignores Wyoming Historical Foundation President Ann Noble’s reminder at the April 12 meeting that the Foundation had previously agreed to help fund the audit. Collectively, this raises serious concerns about financial accountability and transparency of the WHS EC and ED, especially considering WHS has approximately \$550,000 in endowments and cash investments at Hilltop Bank in Casper.
- **Critical financial governance breach: Extended non-compliance with bonding requirements.** According to meeting minutes and other correspondence, the ED failed to secure the mandatory bonding insurance required by Article VIII Section 7 until early March 2025, more than 18 months post-hire (the bylaws stipulate that the ED “shall be bonded for the maximum amount of money in his/her payroll care”). This has and continues to expose the EC to considerable financial and legal liability. For background, the EC voted in favor of obtaining bonding for the ED from State Farm Insurance in the amount of \$200,000, according to January 18, 2025, meeting minutes. Those minutes were later updated on March 3, 2025, stating: “The Society ended up having to go through Tegler [sic] Insurance [sic] to get the bond for both Aley Philp, Executive Director and Heidi McCullough, Treasurer as Tegler [sic] was a better fit and offered more coverage. Both Ms. Philp and Ms. McCullough are fully bonded at the \$200,000 level.” The minutes do not state why McCullough was also bonded with Tegeler & Associates, as that created an additional procedural deviation from the bylaws, which specifically mandate individual ED bonding. And the minutes do not state why the ED could not get bonded with State Farm Insurance.
- **Invalid organizational action: Improper separation from the Wyoming Historical Foundation.** The EC’s unilateral separation from the Foundation is invalid as it occurred *without* Foundation board knowledge and *clearly violates* Foundation governance requiring Foundation board approval. The EC then deliberately misrepresented the separation as “amicable” in selective emails to members and removed the Foundation website without knowledge or consent of the Foundation board. WHS President Beki Speas’ column (“Call to Action”) in the May 2025 *Wyoming History News* presents this separation as necessary for “sustainability,” yet that statement is made with absolutely no input from WHS chapter leadership, WHS members, or Foundation board members.
- **Blatant violations of WHS bylaws and violation of Wyoming State Statutes regarding the WHS Publications Committee and *Annals of Wyoming*.**
  - WY STATE STAT 9-2-415 requires publication of a state historical periodical, and WY STAT 9-2-3211(c) mandates distribution of state publications to designated repositories. Recent issues of *Annals of Wyoming* have not been delivered to the Wyoming State Library, University of Wyoming Libraries, or Library of Congress as required by Wyoming law.

- In February 2025, then WHS President Jessica Flock recommended Charles E. Rankin as the new editor to replace retiring editor Carl Hallberg. Rankin served as editor-in-chief for the University of Oklahoma Press for 16 years before retiring in early 2020, and was highly recommended as the new *Annals* editor and expressed strong interest in the position. Despite a seconded motion by current EC member Nancy Tabb supporting his hire at the February meeting, no vote was apparently taken. Further, the current EC and ED have excluded Publications Committee members Hallberg and Kylie McCormick from any discussions about *Annals* since the February meeting. This is a clear violation of Article IX Section 10 of the WHS bylaws specifically requiring the *Annals* editor to be included as a voting member of the Publications Committee. In addition, McCormick, the editor of WyoHistory.org, is also a member of the committee. These two exclusions, combined with the leadership's failure to respond to member and author inquiries, have left the publication's status uncertain.
- **Procedural violations: Improperly attempting to make significant and sweeping bylaws' changes without authority.** President Speas and the EC violated Article IX Section 2 on April 22, 2025, with proposed bylaw changes that are invalid, because the committee was improperly constituted, no membership resolutions were obtained, many members weren't notified, false claims were made about development history, and online-only voting that disenfranchised members without computer access or proficiency, preventing their participation in this significant governance decision. Specifically, Article IX Section 2 states: "**The President of each county chapter shall be a member of (the Bylaws & Resolutions Committee).**" Other members of the committee include one representative of the EC and three additional members appointed by the WHS president. Current President Speas and other members of the EC have blatantly and deliberately violated this bylaw by excluding **ALL** chapter presidents (except WHS EC Secretary Nancy Tabb, president of the Johnson County HS) from **ALL** discussions and actions taken relating to the proposed sweeping bylaws changes. Concerning the April 22 email that President Speas sent to members, more than half of the approximate 120 members we have communicated with across Wyoming and out of state **DID NOT** receive the email, further pointing to a bylaws' vote that is illegal.
- **Membership communications' breakdown: Selective information distribution.** The ED's poor management of the required membership database and membership fees (in violation of Article VI Section 4) results in numerous chapter leaders and members not receiving communications from Society headquarters. For example, numerous members have reported that they paid 2025 dues in late 2024, yet they continue to receive notices from the ED stating their membership has lapsed and therefore they need to send in dues.
- **Transparency evasion: Concealing WHS meetings and minutes from membership.** The EC has violated Article III Section 11, which states: "**All meetings** of the Executive Committee shall be open to those members of the Society who wish to attend." Among the evidence of transparency evasion and secret meetings include:
  - February 1, 2025, meeting minutes (where the EC voted 5–3 to retain the ED despite Management & Oversight Committee's termination recommendation) have not been posted as of May 13, 2025, a delay of nearly 3 1/2 months.

- The March 11, 2025, “Emergency Meeting” that approved Foundation separation and authorized “Formal Cease and Desist” letters to 23 named members was never announced to membership.
- Significant decisions were made via email in February and March 2025 without member notification; members would not find out about these secretly approved decisions until after minutes were posted.
- April 12, **2025**, meeting notice was buried on the website with incorrect year (**2024**), and with no location, Zoom link, or time provided until 24 hours beforehand.

**In addition, we are extremely concerned by the following:**

- **Unprecedented turnover of EC members raises serious concerns.** After four EC members resigned and one member was forced to resign over a three-month period from late 2024 to early 2025, two newly appointed replacements also departed after serving just weeks. This extraordinary pattern of rapid resignations of seven EC members raises serious questions about the working conditions and practices of the current EC and ED.
- **Systematic retaliation against legitimate member concerns.** “Formal Cease and Desist” and “Formal Censure” letters were emailed to a total of 26 WHS members, chapter officers, Management & Oversight Committee members, WHS past presidents, Foundation board members, and WyoHistory.org leadership who simply raised questions or expressed valid concerns. The May 2025 *Wyoming History News* contains claims by President Speas that members of the EC have “no ulterior motives,” yet these legal threats against WHS members exercising legitimate rights to raise concerns clearly demonstrate otherwise.
- **Poor communication practices and disrespect damage chapter relations.** The EC and ED consistently fail to respond to emails and letters, delay sending chapters their membership fee portions, and communicate disrespectfully with chapter leaders and members raising questions during meetings—particularly targeting chapter leaders and members who have expressed concerns. Following is one example. Near the conclusion of the April 12, 2025, quarterly meeting, President Speas opened the floor for public comments with *clear guidelines against disrespect*. The Albany County Historical Society (ACHS) president inquired about chapter presidents’ required participation on the Bylaws & Resolutions Committee by asking: “When will we know that we are on the committee?” ED Philp responded curtly: “You’re on it,” prompting laughter from most if not all EC members. When the ACHS president followed up by asking when a committee meeting would occur, Philp replied dismissively: “When we set up a meeting. Yeah, when we set up a meeting.” This was followed by laughter from Philp and more laughter from the EC—a stark contradiction to the respectful engagement President Speas had explicitly requested just moments earlier.
- **Future of scholarly publication *Annals of Wyoming* left uncertain.** Despite President Speas’ April 12, 2025, assurance that *Annals* “is not going away,” serious concerns remain about its future direction after the current editor’s retirement in spring 2025. These concerns stem partly from ED Philp’s October 2023 statement that *Annals* is “not considered a main member benefit by many members”—a claim numerous members dispute.

- **Apparent conflict of interest in printer arrangements.** The EC authorized payment to the ED early in her employment with WHS for use of a printer owned by her private graphic design and printing business (PHC Innovative Designs & Promotions), creating what appears to be an obvious conflict of interest. The EC's decision in April 2025 to purchase a Ricoh office printer (apparently the used printer owned by the ED) and fund a maintenance agreement with Capital Business Systems raises serious questions about whether this conflict continues, i.e., is the ED using the WHS printer and Society-funded maintenance agreement, printing paper, and ink for her own private business?

**We call for the following immediate actions by the current WHS EC and ED:**

- **Halt invalid bylaw amendment process.** The EC must immediately stop the current voting process and defer any bylaw changes to the September 2025 annual meeting, allowing time for proper committee constitution and required chapter and member input.
- **Implement moratorium on major decisions.** The EC must postpone all major organizational decisions (beyond essential day-to-day operations) until proper governance is restored with a full, properly constituted EC.
- **Restore proper governance with transparent EC appointments.** The four EC members must consult with the Nominating Committee (Cindy Brown, Linda Fabian, and Lynn Houze) to fill the fifth position for a quorum, then conduct a proper election for remaining positions with 30 days advance notice to ALL members.
- **Conduct required financial audit with available funding from the Foundation.** An independent CPA firm must perform a *thorough* audit of WHS finances immediately after the fifth EC member is appointed. The Foundation's offer to help fund this audit should be accepted, as previously agreed upon, and therefore the Foundation and its legal counsel will be included in (1) the selection of a CPA firm; (2) the oversight of the audit; and (3) follow-up discussions and actions based on the outcome of the audit.
- **Properly constitute all committees per bylaws requirements.** All Article IX committees must be fully staffed, with membership publicly listed on the WHS website. The Publications Committee (including Carl Hallberg and Kylie McCormick) should continue the search for a new *Annals* editor in coordination with Wyoming State Parks & Cultural Resources. This search should take into account the previously discussed recommendation to consider Charles Rankin as a candidate. In addition, the format of *Annals* should be discussed as that is extremely unclear and concerning at this point. [Disclosure: Mr. Rankin is one of the 146 people who signed this Joint Statement.]
- **Ensure accurate membership records for proper communication.** The ED must reconcile all membership and committee lists to ensure ALL members receive communications, correcting the pattern of what appears to be *selective* notification.
- **Implement immediate transparency and inclusivity measures.** The EC and ED must take concrete steps to involve ALL chapters and members in meetings and business decisions, restoring the accountability, transparency, and trust that have been quickly and systematically eroded. All chapter locations must be restored to the website immediately.
- **Resolve printer conflict of interest issues.** Take immediate action to ensure there is no conflict of interest per the WHS printer, maintenance agreement, and supplies, and then notify chapter leaders and members that this matter has been fully resolved in the best interest of WHS funds and accountability.

- **Immediately reinstate the website of the Foundation.** This action is to restore the Foundation website that was taken down by the EC and ED without knowledge or consent of the Foundation board.
- **Restore all chapter information to the website.** The EC and ED must fully reinstate all chapter information, contact details, and events to the WHS website.
- **Issue formal apology to targeted members.** The EC and ED must publish a signed apology in the next issue of *Wyoming History News* to all 26 members who received “Formal Cease and Desist” and “Formal Censure” letters for raising questions or legitimate concerns.
- **Publish this Statement of No Confidence *without* edits.** The EC must publish this statement in its entirety in the next issue of *Wyoming History News* without alteration.

We expect a reply from the EC agreeing to these formal requests by **Thursday, May 22, 2025**, directed to the 11 below-listed members:

Barbara Byrne	byrnco@rangeweb.net
Katie Curtiss	curtiss307@gmail.com
Jim Davis	jimdavis@allwest.net
Linda Fabian	lindafabianwy@gmail.com
Carol Frost	carolfrost2014@gmail.com
Lynn Houze	ljhcody@tctwest.net
Ann Chambers Noble	anoble1227@aol.com
Dwain Romsa	dwain@atwy.net
Milward Simpson	milward62@gmail.com
Leslie Waggener	lwaggen123@gmail.com
Robert Waggener	rw.waggener@gmail.com

Concerning the 37 documents that support the content of this letter, see the accompanying document titled “Index of Supporting Documentation for the Joint Statement of No Confidence.” This index lists all relevant correspondence, chapter letters of concern, meeting minutes, motions, emails, formal letters, contracts, etc., that substantiate the concerns raised herein. Copies of all supporting documents will be provided with this Joint Statement to the EC, ED, and legal counsel.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED** (all signers are members of the WHS unless noted otherwise):

Susan Alberi	At-large member, Sheridan County
Linda M. Abell	Hot Springs County Historical Society member
Stanton J. Abell, Jr.	Hot Springs County Historical Society member
Margaret Adkison	At-large member, Florida
Vicki Adkison	At-large member, California <sup>2</sup>
Claudia Anderson	Star Valley Historical Society secretary-treasurer
Ron Anderson	Star Valley Historical Society president
RoseMarie Aridas	Albany County Historical Society member
Sharon Atwell	At-large member, Arizona

Dan Bach	Laramie County Historical Society member
Bob Bailey	Natrona County Historical Society member
Bob Bayuk	Park County Historical Society member
Ruth Bayuk	Park County Historical Society member
Anna Bechtel	Laramie County Historical Society member
Michael L. Bechtel	Laramie County Historical Society member
Robert (Bob) Berry	Park County Historical Society member
Robin Berry	Park County Historical Society member
Army Col. Frank Bertagnolli	At-large member, Texas
Susan Bishop	Natrona County Historical Society member
Brigida Blasi	Albany County Historical Society member
Cindy Bower	Natrona County Historical Society president
Shannon Brennan	At-large member, Teton County
Robin L. Broumley	Natrona County Historical Society past president
Gene Bryan	At-large member, Arizona
Charlene Busk	Campbell County Historical Society member <sup>1,2</sup>
Barbara Byrne	Crook County Historical Society secretary
Larry Byrne	Crook County Historical Society member
Michael Cassity	WHS past president; at-large member, Oklahoma
Julianne Couch	At-large member, Iowa
Mary B. Cox	Laramie County Historical Society secretary
Nancy Curtis	Platte County Historical Society member
Katie Curtiss	At-large member, Sheridan County
Deborah Davidson	Goshen County Historical Society secretary
Jim Davis	At-large member, Uinta County
Wendy Dickerson	Platte County Historical Society secretary
Lucille Dumbrill	WHS past president; Weston County Historical Society member
Pat Endean	Former WHS part-time employee; Platte County HS member
Mary England	Natrona County Historical Society board member
Richard G. Ewig	WHS past president; at-large member, Laramie County
Linda Fabian	WHS past president; Foundation secretary; Platte Co HS board
Jessica Flock	WHS past president; Albany County Historical Society member
Paul V.M. Flesher	Albany County Historical Society member
Dave Foreman	At-large member, Laramie County
Carol D. Frost	Albany County Historical Society member
Dewey Gallegos	Albany County Historical Society member
Jane Gebhart	WHS past awards chair; Campbell County HS member <sup>1,2</sup>
Nancy Gerlock	Natrona County Historical Society vice president
Cecily Goldie	Albany County Historical Society member
Vickie Goodwin	Converse County Historical Society member
Robert V. Goss	At-large member, Utah
Andrea Graham	Albany County Historical Society member
Aileen Gronewold	At-large member, Missouri
Linda Grosso	At-large member, Sheridan County
Cathy Halverson	Laramie County Historical Society member
Otis Halverson	Laramie County Historical Society member

Ronald Hansen	At-large member, Iowa
Mary Hartman	Laramie County Historical Society co-president
Rebecca Hein	Natrona County Historical Society member
Ken Hert	Albany and Park County Historical Society member
Tamsen Hert	WHS past president; Albany and Park County HS member
Sandra Stewart Holyoak	Campbell County Historical Society member <sup>1,2</sup>
Wayne Holyoak	Campbell County Historical Society member <sup>1,2</sup>
Mary Hopkins	Albany County Historical Society member
Mary F. Houser	Goshen County Historical Society board member
Lynn Houze	WHS past second VP; Park County Historical Society treasurer
Gregory L. Jones	Park County Historical Society president
Patty Kessler	Albany County Historical Society member
Art Kidwell	WHS past president; Park County Historical Society member
Bob King	Natrona County Historical Society member
Erin R. Kinney	At-large member, Indiana
Dell Knight	Albany County Historical Society member
Richard H. Knight, Jr.	At-large member, Tennessee
Rodney Knudson	Crook County Historical Society treasurer
Kay Kuhlmann	At-large member, Kansas
James O. Lockwood	Platte County Historical Society member
Christina McCann	At-large member, Natrona County
Diana McDonald	Platte County Historical Society treasurer
Joan McKee	Platte County Historical Society member
Kathryn McKee	At-large member, North Carolina
Larry McKee	Platte County Historical Society member
Kathleen Michael	At-large member, California
Vicki Mickelsen	Platte County Historical Society former member <sup>2</sup>
Catherine Middleton	Park County Historical Society member
Francis Middleton	Park County Historical Society member
Janelle Molony	At-large member, Arizona
Georgia Moore	At-large member, Converse County
Jim Moore	At-large member, Converse County
Jocelyn Moore	At-large member, Sublette County
Jack Mueller	Laramie County Historical Society co-president
Judy Musgrave	WHS and Foundation past board member; at-large, Sheridan Co
Marge Myers	Goshen County Historical Society president
Kem Nicolaysen	Natrona County Historical Society
Ann Chambers Noble	Foundation president; at-large member, Sublette County
Eric W. Nye	Albany County Historical Society member
Mike Osborn	At-large member, Nebraska
Jim Oster	Crook County Historical Society vice president
Sharon Oster	Crook County Historical Society member
Paula Qualls	Laramie County Historical Society member
Charles Rankin	Park County Historical Society member from Montana
Arlene Robbins	Platte County Historical Society member
Rick Robbins	Foundation vice president; Platte County HS president

Phil Roberts	Albany and Laramie County Historical Society member
Gary Robinett	Goshen County Historical Society board member
Dwain Romsa	Natrona County Historical Society board member
Eric Rossborough	Park County Historical Society member
Sally Sarvey	Natrona County Historical Society member
Barb Schaffner	Platte County Historical Society member
Rosalind Schliske	Laramie County Historical Society member
Gwen Seidel	Platte County Historical Society member
Robert Seidel	Platte County Historical Society member
Milward Simpson	At-large member, Laramie County
Tim Sio	Park County Historical Society member
Jonita Sommers	At-large member, Sublette County
Becky Steensland	Natrona County Historical Society treasurer
Larry Steensland	Natrona County Historical Society member
Melanie Stine	At-large member, Washakie County
Don Stoner	Crook County Historical Society president
Dave Taylor	WHS past president; Natrona County Historical Society member
Tempe Javitz	At-large member, California
David Tate	At-large member, Sweetwater County
Claudia Thompson	Albany County Historical Society member
Bruce Thomson	Laramie County Historical Society member
Gerald Tomayer	Goshen County Historical Society member
Marilyn Toscano	At-large member, Minnesota
Ed Varley	At-large member, Sweetwater County
Rae Dell Varley	At-large member, Sweetwater County
Barb Vietti	Hot Springs County Historical Society member
John Vietti	Hot Springs County Historical Society member
Kim Viner	Albany County Historical Society member
John Voight	Platte County Historical Society member
John R. Waggener	WHS and Foundation past board member; Albany County HS <sup>2</sup>
Leslie Waggener	WHS past president; Foundation board member; Albany Co HS
Robert Waggener	Albany County Historical Society member
Alena M. Wagner	Foundation treasurer; Natrona County Historical Society member
Mary Waian	Park County Historical Society member and substitute secretary
Kristi Wallin	At-large member, Laramie County
Nancy Weidel	Albany County Historical Society member
Mike Wheeler	At-large member, Indiana
Dale Wilen	Laramie County Historical Society member
Marge Wilder	Park County Historical Society member
Christine Alethea Williams	Sweetwater Co Museum Foun. past president; Albany Co HS
Judy Wilson	Platte County Historical Society member
Judy Wolf	Albany County Historical Society member
Josephine Young	Platte County Historical Society member
George Zeimens	Goshen County Historical Society member
Geri Zeimens	Goshen County Historical Society member

<sup>1</sup>The Campbell County Historical Society recently separated from the WHS as a **direct result** of concerns about the current EC and ED, but the CCHS is still an active chapter locally. The CCHS will reconsider joining, but only if issues are resolved.

<sup>2</sup>Members who recently separated from the WHS as a **direct result** of concerns about the current EC and ED. They will reconsider joining, but only if issues are resolved.

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