

## Montana Trooper

# From the Attorney General



Montana  
Attorney General  
Tim Fox

As I write this message, the sun is setting on another bitterly cold day in Helena. It's hard to believe that 2013 is winding down, and we're closing in on the end of my first year as Montana's Attorney General. During the past several months, I've traveled to all corners of the state, and I have had the pleasure of meeting many of you and observing first-hand how you serve the public every day in ways that are essential to the safety of our communities and the highways that lead us there.

To say this has been a year of growth for us at the Montana Department of Justice and the Montana Highway Patrol would be a great understatement. Over the past year, the challenges and changes we've faced collectively have not always been easy, but they have inspired us to seek new ways to serve a state that is growing rapidly as new economic opportunities present themselves in eastern Montana.

The Bakken oil boom and related population growth have brought with it increased law enforcement needs. That's why my office fought hard for more resources in areas that have been impacted by this unprecedented opportunity. As a result, we were able to send more personnel to eastern Montana this

summer to improve public safety in an area where resources are stretched dangerously thin. Sergeant Troy Muri and Trooper Joseph Fowler are based in Sidney, Trooper Deedra Fillion is stationed in Wolf Point, and Trooper Matt Finley is out of Culbertson. They're witnessing how once-quiet communities like neighboring Fairview seem more like large urban areas as 8,000 tractor trailers drive through town every day.

In addition to handling increased commercial traffic problems, these troopers respond to other situations that have accompanied the Bakken boom, like domestic disturbances, thefts, and DUIs. One of their main focuses is working collaboratively with partners on the local, state, and federal levels to stem the tide of drugs into the region. These partnerships are paying off with increased numbers of drug seizures in the area.

All troopers, not just those serving in the Bakken region, are acutely aware of the toll driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs takes on Montana's families. While there are many collective accomplishments we can look back on with pride at year end, the legislation we passed to improve law enforcement infrastructure and make our highways and communities safer is a definite highlight. With your help, an impairment level for all marijuana users for DUI purposes was established, judges can now look back further in repeat DUI offenders' records to deliver stiffer penalties and get them into successful treatment programs, and the manufacture, distribution, sale, and possession of designer drugs is now illegal in Montana.

We can look forward to many more

accomplishments in 2014. Colonel Tom Butler, who began his career at the Highway Patrol 21 years ago, is a proven leader and administrator. He tackles challenges head-on, and I knew he was the right person to take the helm of Montana's premier law enforcement agency this past fall. Colonel Butler rose through the ranks, and many of you will remember when he was promoted to the rank of major and placed in charge of Patrol operations four years ago. In that capacity, Colonel Butler oversaw the Patrol's budget and technology infrastructure upgrades, took the lead on legislative issues important to Montana's law enforcement community, and worked closely with our office to expand the 24/7 Sobriety Program. With his help, the program is now in twenty-five counties. In 2014, we'll continue to reach out to all counties who don't have the program to see if we can get something in place that works for them.

Also in the year ahead, the Patrol will continue to establish its K-9 program, which will assist with drug interdictions. Our immediate goal is five narcotics/patrol dogs, which includes a K-9 sergeant and four canine troopers.

These are just two of the ways we can make Montana safer in the New Year, and I want to hear your ideas on others in the months ahead.

It's my very great privilege to serve as your Attorney General. I thank you for the important work each of you do for the citizens of Montana every day in sub-zero temperatures, on remote roads miles away from the nearest town, and in booming oilfields. I wish you and your families a safe and healthy new year. □