

BEFORE THE COMMISSIONER OF POLITICAL PRACTICES
STATE OF MONTANA

In Re the Ethics Complaint of MONTANA DEMOCRATIC PARTY v. COREY STAPLETON, Montana Secretary of State	CAUSE NO. COPP-2019-ETH-001 SUMMARY DECISION OF COMPLAINT WITHOUT INFORMAL CONTESTED CASE HEARING
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On January 9, 2019, the Montana Democratic Party (MDP), filed an ethics complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Political Practices (COPP), posed as a complaint against Corey Stapleton, Montana's Secretary of State (SOS).

On January 9, Commissioner Jeff Mangan notified Mr. Stapleton and, in order to make an initial determination whether the Complaint stated a potential violation, pursuant to Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-136(1)(a), requested further information from Mr. Stapleton on the following issues:

1. Copies of any correspondence between yourself and all public employees regarding the referenced campaign announcement, including text messages, emails, or other electronic correspondence;
2. Copies of correspondence between yourself and any other individual/s regarding this announcement, including text messages, emails, or other electronic correspondence;
3. The name/s of the individual/s who composed or wrote this announcement, where, and when it was written or composed; and
4. A list of all recipients of this announcement.

On January 10, Mr. Stapleton provided his response to the foregoing questions and on January 11, Commissioner Mangan requested that he

explain or describe how the original text-only version of the campaign announcement was converted into official press release format, and by whom[.]

Mr. Stapleton hand delivered his response to the COPP office the same day.

Also on January 11, 2019, Commissioner Mangan issued a Notice that the Ethics Complaint filed by the Montana Democratic Party was accepted for filing and notice of intent to issue summary decision to both parties that included an opportunity to object to the issuance of a summary decision and to request an informal contested case hearing. The Notice provided the parties a January 25, 2019, deadline date to submit objection. Neither party submitted an objection or requested a hearing.

JURISDICTION AND AUTHORITY

The Commissioner of Political Practices has jurisdiction to hear and decide complaints filed under Montana's Code of Ethics against state officers, legislators, state employees and county attorneys. Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-136. Mr. Stapleton is an elected official and serves as the Secretary of State of Montana. The Code of Ethics defines a public officer as "any state officer," Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-102(8)(a). A state officer "includes all elected officers and directors of the executive branch of state government," Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-102(11). The Secretary of State is an Officer of the executive branch office (Mont. Const. Art. VI, sec. 1). Secretary Stapleton therefore is a public officer and subject to the Montana Code of Ethics.

Unless a complaint is dismissed as frivolous, or for failing to state a claim of a potential violation of the code, the Commissioner "shall hold an informal contested case hearing[.]" Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-136(1)(c). However, "[i]f the issues presented in a complaint have been addressed and decided in a prior decision and the commissioner determines that no additional factual development is necessary, the commissioner may issue a summary decision without holding an informal contested case hearing on the complaint[.]" *Id.*, at (1)(b).

Having reviewed the MDP Complaint and Mr. Stapleton's responses, Commissioner Mangan determines from the facts presented and admitted in the record that no additional factual development is necessary pursuant to prior decisions of this

office in *Fox v. Molnar*, September 13, 2010 (Comm'r Unsworth)¹ and *Cooper v. Johnson*, COPP-2016-ETH-007 (Comm'r Mangan, July 10, 2017). Therefore, the Commissioner issues the following summary decision without holding an informal contested case hearing on the complaint. *Id.*

CONTENTIONS

MDP's Complaint alleges that "[o]n January 2, 2109, Secretary Stapleton sent out an announcement that he is now a candidate for the office of Governor of Montana. The announcement was sent from an official state email account and on letterhead containing the Montana state seal. Inquiries about the campaign announcement were directed to an employee of the Secretary of State's office via an official state of Montana email account." The statute referenced by MDP, Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3), is found in the Montana Code of Ethics, which provides that public officers are prohibited from using:

(a) ... public time, facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, or funds to solicit support for or opposition to any political committee, the nomination or election of any person to public office ... unless the use is:

(i) authorized by law; or

(ii) properly incidental to another activity required or authorized by law, such as the function of an elected public officer, the officer's staff, or the legislative staff in the normal course of duties.

(b) As used in this [section], "properly incidental to another activity required or authorized by law" does not include any activities related to solicitation of support for or opposition to the nomination or election of a person to public office

(c) This [section] is not intended to restrict the right of a public officer or public employee to express personal political views.

Mont Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a)-(c).

Mr. Stapleton's response included: a copy of an email sent from Mr. Stapleton's personal email account to Christi Jacobson, Chief of Staff, Montana Secretary of State; a copy of a press release; a statement of by who, where, and when the press release was written; an email list of press release recipients; a copy of the final press release on SOS

¹ Affirmed by the Thirteenth Judicial District Court in *Molnar v. Fox*, Cause No. DV-10-1718 (Waters, J.; Feb. 6, 2012); affirmed by the Montana Supreme Court in *Molnar v. Fox*, 2013 MT 132, 370 Mont. 238, 301 P.3d 824 (May 14, 2013).

letterhead; and a statement of by who and how the press release was placed on the SOS letterhead.

FINDINGS OF FACT

In order to apply the law to this matter, the following facts are necessary and expressly found by the Commissioner:

1. Corey Stapleton won the November 8, 2016 election to become Montana's Secretary of State in Montana's 2016 General election, held on November 8, 2016.
2. On January 2, 2017, Mr. Stapleton was officially sworn in as Montana Secretary of State and he continues to serve in that position.
3. Susan Ames is an employee of the State of Montana, Montana Secretary of State's Office. Her title is Office Manager.
4. Christi Jacobsen is an employee of the State of Montana, Montana Secretary of State's Office. Her title is Chief of Staff.
5. On January 2, 2019, Mr. Stapleton announced his intent to run as a candidate for Montana Governor in the upcoming 2020 election. The announcement was made via a press release sent from the email account of Ms. Ames using the email address sames@mt.gov and was printed on letterhead featuring the State Seal of Montana. (Exhibit A.)
6. Earlier on January 2, 2019, Mr. Stapleton sent an email from his personal email account with the subject line, "Press release for immediate release," to the State of Montana email account of Ms. Jacobsen, with an attachment of the press release copy. (Stapleton Response.) (Exhibit B.)
7. Mr. Stapleton wrote the press release himself on January 2, 2019. (Stapleton Response.)
8. On January 2, Ms. Jacobsen then forwarded the Stapleton press release email from her State of Montana email account with the subject line, "Fwd: Press release for immediate release," to the State of Montana email account of Ms. Ames, with the attachment of the press release copy. (Stapleton Response.) (Ex. B.)
9. On January 2, Ms. Ames copy and pasted the press release from the Stapleton email onto State of Montana letterhead and added the text, "FOR

IMMEDIATE RELEASE, January 2, 2019, Contact Susan Ames, sames@mt.gov.” (Stapleton Response.) (Ex. A.)

10. Mr. Stapleton instructed Ms. Ames to cut and paste the press release onto letterhead. (Stapleton Response.) (Exhibit C.)

11. On January 2, Ms. Ames emailed the press release from her State of Montana email account to 154 media recipients and the State of Montana email accounts of Ms. Jacobsen and Mr. Stapleton. (Stapleton Response.) (Ex. A.)

12. The press release contains six paragraphs. The first paragraph announces Mr. Stapleton is running for Governor. The fifth paragraph is a statement of candidacy including references to campaign issues. The remaining paragraphs are references to Mr. Stapleton’s qualification and character for office.

13. Mr. Stapleton’s January 2, 2019, Gubernatorial announcement was covered by multiple publications or news sources available in Montana.²

DISCUSSION

Montana’s constitution instructs that there shall be a code of ethics for state and local officers and employees and legislators “prohibiting conflict between public duty and private interest[.]” Mont. Const., Art. XIII, sec. 4. The Montana Legislature enacted such a Code of Ethics, stating: “The holding of public office or employment is a public trust, created by the confidence that the electorate reposes in the integrity of

² A sample of media reports include:

- all Lee Enterprises newspapers in Montana (Helena IR, Billings Gazette, Missoulian, Montana Standard, etc.): https://helenair.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/corey-stapleton-announces-he-s-running-for-montana-governor/article_a1859f56-f957-51c5-864e-14b05744cebb.html;
- the AP: <https://apnews.com/774bc7aa09bf4e0a9823d362767df6ff>;
- the Bozeman Daily Chronicle: https://www.bozemandailychronicle.com/ap_news/montana/corey-stapleton-announces-his-nd-run-for-montana-governor/article_f43e5922-5812-51f2-88d9-d8102db340ed.html;
- the Great Falls Tribune: <https://www.greatfalls Tribune.com/story/news/2019/01/02/corey-stapleton-run-governor-montana-2020/2462650002/>;
- ABC FOX Montana: https://www.abcfoxmontana.com/helena/corey-stapleton-announces-plan-to-run-for-mt-governor-in/article_a5eedfoe-0ea7-11e9-8965-5b2b13a24945.html;
- NBC Montana: <https://nbcmontana.com/news/local/corey-stapleton-to-run-for-mt-governor-in-2020>; and
- the Flathead Beacon: <https://flatheadbeacon.com/2019/01/02/corey-stapleton-announces-candidacy-montana-governor/>.

public officers, legislators, and public employees ... [who] shall carry out the individual's duties for the benefit of the people of the state." Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-103(1). "A public officer ... or public employee whose conduct departs from the person's public duty is liable to the people of the state and is subject to the penalties provided ... for abuse of the public's trust." *Id.*, at (2).

As noted above, having been elected to serve as Montana's Secretary of State, Mr. Stapleton is a "public officer" within the meaning of the Code. *Id.*, § 2-2-102(8)(a), (11). As an individual, Mr. Stapleton has a right to express his own personal political views, including promoting his own candidacy for public office. *Id.*, § 2-2-121(3)(c); 51 Op. Att'y Gen. No. 1 (2005). Further, there are exceptions for the use of public resources by public officers, employees and agencies when the uses are "properly incidental to another activity required or authorized by law." Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a)(i)-(ii). For example, it is a proper use of state resources for a public officer or employee to determine the impact of the passage or failure of proposed of ballot issues on governmental operations. *Id.*, at (3)(b)(i).

However, the Code expressly states that "properly incidental" activities "[do] not include any activities related to solicitation of support for or opposition to the nomination or election of a person to public office or political committees organized to support or oppose a candidate or candidates for public office." *Id.*, at (3)(b) (emphasis added). In other words, the use of state resources to solicit support for or opposition to a nomination or election to public office is prohibited. In response to a media inquiry asking if he had a concern about the use of a State email address to send the press release, Mr. Stapleton replied, "No – absolutely not. It's not campaigning."³

The Commissioner examined the press release (Ex. A) to determine if it is indeed a political communication. The press release is titled: "MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE COREY STAPLETON ANNOUNCES HE IS RUNNING FOR GOVERNOR." The first line of the announcement mirrors the title and states, "Montana Secretary of State Corey Stapleton announced today that he is running for Governor in 2020." The next three paragraphs reference qualification and character, touting perceived successes in his current position, his background, education, work, and public service history; the

³ See The Independent Record, Helena, MT., Holly K. Michels, January 2, 2019.

final, sixth paragraph includes with biographical family information. (FOF No. 12.) The fifth paragraph is a statement of candidacy including references to issues—*e.g.*, “As Governor, I’d like to lead ... stronger families and higher wages, lower taxes and smaller government, and ... having greater freedoms for all of us[.]” (*Id.*)

1. "Solicitation of Support"

The Montana Code of Ethics does not provide a specific definition of the phrase "support for or opposition to," so it is reasonable for the Commissioner to look to other definitions in statute. Mont. Code Ann. § 1-2-107. The Disclose Act, passed by the 2015 Montana Legislature, defined "support or oppose" in the campaign finance reporting and disclosure realm, and the Commissioner has determined those definitions also apply to the Code of Ethics. *Cooper*, at 7; *Adams v. Board of Regents*, COPP-2018-ETH-001, at 16-17 (Comm’r Mangan) .

"Support or oppose," including any variations of the term, means:

(a) using express words, including but not limited to "vote", "oppose", "support", "elect", "defeat", or "reject", that call for the nomination, election, or defeat of one or more clearly identified candidates, the election or defeat of one or more political parties, or the passage or defeat of one or more ballot issues submitted to voters in an election; or

(b) otherwise referring to or depicting one or more clearly identified candidates, political parties, or ballot issues in a manner that is susceptible of no reasonable interpretation other than as a call for the nomination, election, or defeat of the candidate in an election, the election or defeat of the political party, or the passage or defeat of the ballot issue or other question submitted to the voters in an election.

Mont. Code Ann. § 13-1-101(50).

Mr. Stapleton's press release twice states, "Stapleton announces he is running for Governor[.]" and uses the phrase, “As Governor[.]” in reference to his own candidacy. (Ex. A; FOF No. 12.) Further, the press release focuses on Mr. Stapleton's candidacy, character and fitness for office, "As Governor[.]" (Ex. A; FOF No. 12.) Objectively and clearly, Mr. Stapleton's press release regarding his candidacy for Governor was presented in a manner that is susceptible of no reasonable interpretation other than as a call for his nomination and election to be Governor. In response to the press release, the media indeed announced Corey Stapleton was running for Montana Governor across print, video, and other media. (FOF No. 13).

Mr. Stapleton's press release solicited support for his nomination as Governor. By law, Mr. Stapleton's press release cannot be, and was not properly incidental to his duties as the Secretary of State and is not an exempted communication under Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a)(ii). Therefore, Mr. Stapleton's press release was a violation of the Montana Code of Ethics if public "time, facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, or funds" were used to create and distribute the press release. *Id.*, § 2-2-121(3)(a).

2. Public Time, Facilities and Equipment

The Code of Ethics prohibits public officers from using public "facilities, [and] equipment" to promote or oppose the election of a candidate to office, Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a). Materials provided by Mr. Stapleton in response to the Complaint provide sufficient evidence to conclude that, as Secretary, he authorized: the use of a State computer at the Montana Secretary of State's office to prepare for distribution a campaign announcement via press release on state letterhead (FOF Nos. 6, 10); the use of the State's email system and work-time to provide instruction to two SOS personnel regarding issuance of the press release (FOF Nos. 3, 4, 6, 8, 10); and to distribute the press release using State email to 154 members of the media (Ex. A; FOF No. 11). At least four newspapers received and published the letter. (FOF No. 6.)

The Commissioner determines that Secretary Stapleton improperly used state facilities and equipment to solicit support the nomination and election of a person for public office in violation of Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a). *See also Fox v. Molnar*, at 24-26 (Comm'r Unsworth); *Molnar v. Fox*, at 12-16 (Waters, J.); *Molnar v. Fox*, 2013 MT 132, ¶¶35-46; *Cooper*, at 8 (§ 2, 3).

3. Public Personnel

The Code of Ethics also prohibits public officers from using public "personnel" to solicit support for or oppose the nomination or election of a person to public office. Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a). Materials provided by Mr. Stapleton in response to the Complaint provide sufficient evidence to conclude that, as Secretary, he instructed Christi Jacobsen and Susan Ames, public employees of the Montana Secretary of State (FOF Nos. 3, 4) to prepare and distribute a campaign announcement via press release (Exs. A, B; FOF Nos. 5, 6, 8-11).

The Commissioner determines that Secretary Stapleton improperly used state personnel to solicit support for the nomination or election of a person for public office in violation of Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a). *See also Cooper*, at 8 (§ 4).

SUMMARY

Mr. Stapleton has a right to express his personal political views. Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(c). Mr. Stapleton does not have, however, a right to the use of state resources to express those personal political views. *Id.*, at (a). To be clear, had Mr. Stapleton conducted the same activity using his personal resources, the Commissioner would have dismissed the complaint as frivolous on its face.

Corey Stapleton's January 2, 2019 press statement was a solicitation of support for his nomination and election to public office, and therefore that the following conduct with regard to that statement violated Montana's Code of Ethics:

Prohibited Use of State Resources
Emailed draft press statement to SOS personnel for release
Authorized and instructed SOS personnel to format the press statement on State equipment
Authorized and instructed the use of State supplies – letterhead with seal
Emailed press statement on SOS State email system to 154 members of the media

It is incumbent on individual public employees and officers, and the agencies that they work for, to know the obligations that the Code of Ethics places on them while on the job, at the workplace, and in the use of state resources. Public employment and service comes imbued with the public trust. The public trust requires proper use of state resources by all public servants for the good of all Montanans. Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-103(1).

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Mr. Stapleton's January 2, 2019 press release solicited support for his own nomination or election to public office within the meaning of Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a).
2. Mr. Stapleton's press release was not properly incidental to his position as Montana Secretary of State and is not an exempted communication under Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(c).
3. Mr. Stapleton improperly used both State facilities and state equipment in the creation, use of letterhead and the State seal, and emailing of a press release

announcing his candidacy for public office in violation of Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a).

4. Mr. Stapleton improperly used state personnel to format and distribute a press release announcing his candidacy for public office in violation of Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-121(3)(a).

ORDER

The Code of Ethics provides that when the Commissioner has determined there has been a violation, "an administrative penalty of not less than \$50 or more than \$1,000" and "costs of the proceeding" may be imposed. Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-136(2)(a), (c).

1. The Commissioner finds and decides that Mr. Stapleton is liable for four separate violations of the Code of Ethics, one each for improper use of (1) facilities, (2) equipment, (3) supplies, and (4) personnel to format and distribute press release to 154 media representatives announcing his candidacy for public office on January 2, 2019.⁴ For these four violations the Commissioner orders that Mr. Stapleton is personally liable to the people of the State of Montana for a total of \$4,000 for misuse of state resources.

2. During these proceedings, the Montana Democratic Party did not retain an attorney, and it appears that the costs incurred would be minimal. Therefore, the Commissioner will not assess the Montana Democratic Party's costs against Mr. Stapleton.

3. The Commissioner's office did incur costs in dealing with this matter, through the use of in-house and outside legal counsel, personnel, time, equipment, facilities and supplies. Given that the issues in this Complaint were addressed and decided in prior decisions and no additional factual development was needed, the

⁴ Previous Commissioners have interpreted this statute differently, such as suggesting a separate fine for each radio station to which a public service announcement was sent. *See e.g., MT Republican Party v. Schweitzer*, Final Decision, at 3 (Dep. Comm'r Goetz, Mar. 1, 2012).

This Commissioner concludes that in this case it is a more appropriate use of state resources to assess a full \$1,000 fine for each category of misuse, rather than incurring the expense of an entire informal contested case proceeding to determine the number of discrete violations in each category of misuse (*e.g.*, \$50 x 154 members = \$7,700 penalty for emailing the press release, plus a separate penalty for misuse of state public equipment and supplies, and an additional penalty for use of public personnel).

Commissioner will not assess COPP's costs against Mr. Stapleton for the Summary Decision proceedings.

NOTICE

The Commissioner provides notice to the parties that this summary decision is a final agency order, and either party may seek judicial review of the Commissioner's determination pursuant to Montana Code Annotated, Title 2, Chapter 4, part 7. Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-136(3). The parties are further informed that the Complaint, record established, and Decision are available for public inspection. Mont. Code Ann. § 2-2-136(4).

ORDERED this 11th day of February, 2019.



Jeffrey Mangan
Commissioner of Political Practices
P.O. Box 202401
Helena, MT 59620-2401

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that I caused a true and accurate copy of the foregoing to be emailed and send by first class US mail to:

Montana Democratic Party
P.O. Box 802
Helena, MT 59624

Montana Secretary of State
Corey Stapleton
P.O. Box 202801
Helena, MT 59620

DATED this _____ day of February, 2019.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 2, 2019

Contact: Susan Ames

sames@mt.gov

MONTANA SECRETARY OF STATE COREY STAPLETON ANNOUNCES HE IS RUNNING FOR GOVERNOR IN 2020

HELENA, MT – Montana Secretary of State Corey Stapleton announced today that he is running for Governor in 2020. Stapleton, 51, is a Great Falls native and graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He was elected Secretary of State in November 2016.

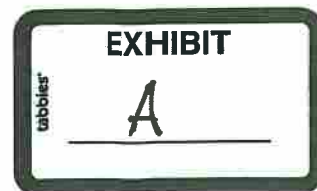
“As Secretary of State and Montana’s business officer, our Office has made it easier for small businesses to operate in Montana. Not only have we streamlined and simplified the dealings that business owners have with state government, we are leading the nation in modernizing the way businesses file online.

As Montana’s Chief Elections Officer, our Office has tackled the most difficult issues in modern Elections. I’m proud to say that we have increased election security, increased the integrity of mail ballots, and increased voter participation. In short, we’ve made it easier to vote and harder to cheat!” Stapleton said.

In addition to improving elections and business services, Stapleton touted the significant reduction in spending at the Office of the Secretary of State since he took office two years ago. Stapleton served eleven years in the navy as a Surface Warfare Officer, deploying overseas aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) and aegis cruiser USS Hue City (CG-68). He holds a bachelor of science degree in General Engineering from the Naval Academy, a master of arts degree in Political Science from Temple University, and a master of science degree in Financial Services from The American College in Pennsylvania.

“As Governor, I’d like to lead the conversation on how we steer towards a Montana that has stronger families and higher wages, lower taxes and smaller government, and how we can lead the nation in having greater freedoms for all of us. I’ll work with anyone and everyone to help get us there.”

Stapleton is a financial advisor and former state senator from Billings. He and his wife, Terry, have four children.



Wed 1/2/2019 8:42 AM

Ames, Susan SAmes@mt.gov

Secretary of State Stapleton to run for Governor in 2020

Question 4

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tribpublisher@greatfallsribune.com; pbelling@billingsgazette.com; DEhrlick@Billingsgazette.com;
edit@dailyinterlake.com; Jacobsen, Christi <CJacobsen@mt.gov>; Stapleton, Corey
Corey.Stapleton@mt.gov

Question 1

Ames, Susan

From: Jacobsen, Christi
Sent: Wednesday, January 2, 2019 8:24 AM
To: Ames, Susan
Subject: Fwd: Press release for immediate release
Attachments: GovAnnouncePressRelease.docx; ATT00001.htm

Christi

Begin forwarded message:

From: Corey Stapleton <coreystapleton92@gmail.com>
Date: January 2, 2019 at 8:16:01 AM MST
To: "Jacobsen, Christi" <CJacobsen@mt.gov>
Subject: Press release for immediate release

Hi Christi,

Could you have this press release sent asap? Thank you!

Corey



January 2, 2019

For immediate release:

Montana Secretary of State Corey Stapleton announced today that he is running for Governor in 2020.

Stapleton, 51, is a Great Falls native and graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. He was elected Secretary of State in November 2016.

“As Secretary of State and Montana’s business officer, our Office has made it easier for small businesses to operate in Montana. Not only have we streamlined and simplified the dealings that business owners have with state government, we are leading the nation in modernizing the way businesses file online.

As Montana’s Chief Elections Officer, our Office has tackled the most difficult issues in modern Elections. I’m proud to say that we have increased election security, increased the integrity of mail ballots, and increased voter participation. In short, we’ve made it easier to vote and harder to cheat!” Stapleton said.

In addition to improving elections and business services, Stapleton touted the significant reduction in spending at the Office of the Secretary of State since he took office two years ago.

Stapleton served eleven years in the navy as a Surface Warfare Officer, deploying overseas aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67) and aegis cruiser USS Hue City (CG-68). He holds a bachelor’s of science degree in General Engineering from the Naval Academy, a master of arts degree in Political Science from Temple University, and a master of science degree in Financial Services from The American College in Pennsylvania.

“As Governor, I’d like to lead the conversation on how we steer towards a Montana that has stronger families and higher wages, lower taxes and smaller government, and how we can lead the nation in having greater freedoms for all of us. I’ll work with anyone and everyone to help get us there.”

Stapleton is a financial advisor and former state senator from Billings. He and his wife, Terry, have four children.

COREY STAPLETON
SECRETARY OF STATE



STATE OF MONTANA

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COMMISSIONER OF
POLITICAL PRACTICES

January 11, 2019

Jeffrey A. Mangan
Commissioner of Political Practices
1209 8th Avenue
P O Box 202401
Helena MT 59620

ETHICS COMPLAINT – COPP-2019-ETH-001

Dear Commissioner Mangan,

Susan Ames cut and pasted the text of the press release I sent to Christi Jacobsen onto my letterhead per my instructions.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corey Stapleton".

COREY STAPLETON
Secretary of State

