

BEFORE THE COMMISSIONER OF POLITICAL PRACTICES
STATE OF MONTANA

In Re: The matters of Bennett v. Roascio and Bennett v. Bohleen	COPP-2026-CFP-013 COPP-2026-CFP-012 ORDER APPOINTING DEPUTY COMMISSIONER
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PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On May 1, 2026, Albert Bennett of Red Lodge, MT, filed two campaign finance and practices complaints with Montana's Office of the Commissioner of Political Practices (COPP). The complaints were filed against Crystal Roascio, Carbon County Election Administrator, and Macque Bohleen, Carbon County Clerk & Recorder. The submitted complaints were properly signed and notarized, and alleged violations of statutes falling under the jurisdiction of COPP. Therefore, they were accepted as filed and in accordance with COPP procedures, a response was requested from Ms. Bohleen and Ms. Roascio. A response was provided on behalf of Ms. Bohleen and Ms. Roascio by the Carbon County County Attorney, Alex Nixon.

AUTHORITY

Montana law vests in the Commissioner of Political Practices the duty to investigate all alleged violations of election law contained in Title 13, chapters 35 and 37, of the Montana code, and to enforce these laws in conjunction with Montana county attorneys. MCA § 13-37-111. "If the commissioner determines that considering a matter would give rise to the appearance of impropriety or a conflict of interest, the commissioner is recused from participating in the matter." MCA § 13-37-111(3). Unless a complaint is filed against the commissioner, recusal is discretionary. See *Powell v. Mottl*, OP-14-0711, Order of the Montana Supreme Court (Nov. 6, 2014).

The complainant in the above-named matters, Albert Bennett, is the spouse of Lisa Bennett. Prior to his appointment as Commissioner of Political Practices,

Commissioner Gallus represented Lisa Bennett in a matter pertaining to a public records request against the respondents who are also named in Mr. Bennett's complaint. To the best of my knowledge and belief this matter also remains pending. Although Commissioner Gallus is not a party to the current proceedings, he has a tangential relationship to the matter. Consequently, Commissioner Gallus believes recusing himself from the above-named matters currently before COPP, is in the best interest of COPP, Montana citizens, and the parties.

When the commissioner must appoint a deputy commissioner that meets the same qualifications as the commissioner himself which are described in MCA § 13-37-107.

APPOINTMENT

In this matter, Commissioner Gallus has recused himself, and Patrick Risken is hereby appointed to serve as deputy commissioner. The Commissioner has determined that Mr. Risken meets the qualifications described in MCA § 13-37-107 and has duly executed a contract with Mr. Risken in accordance with MCA § 13-37-111(7). This appointment begins on the 16th day of June, 2026, and terminates on December 31, 2026, unless extended by a written agreement signed by the Commissioner and Mr. Risken. Mr. Risken has the same authority, duties, and responsibilities as the commissioner in the above-named matter in accordance with MCA § 13-37-111(6).

Signed this of 16th day of June, 2026.



Chris J. Gallus
Commissioner of Political Practices
State of Montana