

350 Montana Editorial

[Judge Kathy Seeley's Findings of Fact in the *Held v Montana* decision](#) should be required reading for all Montanans, especially those who have recently joined us.

Many of us have come from elsewhere. That's been a constant in Montana's 165 years of statehood, and before. Let's say what all residing Montanans have said to newcomers, 'steaders, fortune-seekers, and migrants from unlivable places.

Welcome aboard. Let's get to work.

Today's Montana is a Petro-State dominated by officials, elected and not, who would drill, scrape, transport, refine, and burn every drop of oil, every hissing cubic foot of methane, and every chunk of coal. They are single-minded and ruthless. They are the same extractors we've always known, blind to Montana's beauty, blind to Montana's need, blind to climate change, blind to the economic losses of [agriculture](#) and [recreation](#), blind to everything that doesn't make a buck.

The extractors are in ascendance. Under their watch, Montana's gone from easy-going and affordable to the have and have-not state. When did we become like Hawaii, one of the most expensive places to live in the country? We now pay the fourth highest power bills in the country. The extractors are fine with it. They want to make Montana, what the late writer William Kittredge called the Last Best Place, [into the Last Greenhouse Gasp](#).

Luckily, there have been enough people here to preserve Montana's "clean and healthful environment," its forests and wilderness, its magnificent rivers, its parks, peaks, and prairies. Ordinary people possessed by a love of this place have stepped up time and time again to say no to cyanide-leach gold mines, nuclear power, clearcutting the forests, roping off our rivers and streams as private, killing predators until none were left, and selling the buffalo's bones.

Now it's time to say no again [and transition the Petro-State to the clean energy State](#). We can choose to sleep-walk through the extractors tarnishing the sky with enough greenhouse gases to turn this planet into Venus. Or we can fight them. The *Held* decision points the way.

"The State's actions exacerbate anthropogenic climate change and cause further harms to Montana's environment and its citizens, especially its youth," the court concluded. "The unrefuted testimony at trial established that [climate change is a critical threat to public health](#) . . . Every additional ton of GHG emissions exacerbates [the kids'] injuries and risks locking in irreversible climate injuries."

At the end of the trial, Stanford University's Mark Jacobson testified – unrefuted by the Petro-State – that, by 2050, Montana could generate all the energy it needs using clean, carbon-free

technologies. Wind, hydro, geothermal, and solar electrical generation would cut our energy costs from \$9.1 to \$2.8 billion a year, a 70 percent savings.

“The current barriers to implementing renewable energy systems are not technical or economic,” the Judge concluded, “but social and political. Such barriers primarily result from government policies that slow down and inhibit the transition to renewables, and laws that allow authorization of fossil fuel development and preclude a faster transition to a clean renewable energy system.”

By harnessing Montana’s natural resources for wind, water, and solar, we can transition the Petro-State to a 100 percent carbon-free, clean energy system that unrefuted testimony at trial said would cost 70 percent less and make the next generation of Montanans damn proud of their employment.

That’s our vision. Join us.