



PRESS PASS

MNA ANNUAL CONVENTION TO BE HELD JUNE 16-17, 2023 IN HELENA

We look forward to seeing all of our members at the 138th Annual Convention of the Montana Newspaper Association.

The convention will be held at the Delta Colonial Hotel in beautiful Helena, MT on June 16-17, 2023.

We have three great tours scheduled for Friday June 16th that are included with your conference registration. We also have a golf scramble for those that want to hit the links at Fox Ridge Golf Club. We cap off the day with our Major Awards Dinner.

Saturday features some great training sessions and will end the with a celebratory dinner for our BNC Award Winners.

See the full schedule on the following pages. Hotel reservation deadline is Wed. 5/31/23.

[CLICK TO REGISTER FOR MNA ANNUAL CONVENTION](#)

Friday June 16th Included in Conference Registration



**LAST CHANCE
GULCH TOUR
TRAIN**



**BREWERIES &
BROTHEL TOUR**



**GATES OF THE
MOUNTAINS BOAT
TOUR**

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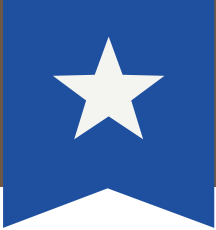
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MNA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

2023 ANNUAL CONVENTION AGENDA

Friday 6/16/23

9 am – 10:30 am **MNA / MNAS Combined Board Meeting**

Combined MNA / MNAS Board Meeting will be held at the Delta Colonial Hotel

11 am **Golf Scramble and Lunch at Fox Ridge Golf Club**

11 am **Breweries & Brothels Walking Tour**

Provided by Foundation for Montana History – Can accommodate up to 25 people.

Approximately 90-minute tour – 1.5 miles guided. Difficulty: mild

Explore the colorful history of Helena's prominent brewery scene and historic red-light district during this downtown walking tour beginning at legendary Reeder's Alley. Stories of entrepreneurial Brewmeisters and madams divulge the rise and fall of Helena's underworld that will excite, surprise, and inform a forgotten history of the capital.

11:30 am **LUNCH - On your own**

1 pm **Last Chance Tour Train – Downtown Helena**

Marvel at the Cathedral of St. Helena with its dramatic 230-foot spires (about 20 stories). Cruise by Reeder's Alley, a charming, restored miners' village from gold rush days. See the authentic pioneer cabin built in 1864, one of the last remaining structures that represents Helena's early days.

Catch a glimpse of The Old Fire Tower. Built in 1876, it's one of the few remaining historic fire towers in the United States. Enjoy the unique downtown architecture along Last Chance Gulch, including buildings embellished with giant lizards, thumbprints, and gargoyles.

View the Greek Renaissance architecture of Montana's impressive State Capitol. Constructed of native Columbus sandstone and crowned with a massive copper dome, the Capitol had its cornerstone laid in 1899. Construction of this impressive structure was completed and dedicated in 1902.

See the opulent mansion district, featuring the dream homes of Helena's mining millionaires. Roll right by our governor's homes, old and new. You'll see the Victorian beauty that served as the home of Montana's governors from 1913 to 1959, as well as the newer home where the governor resides.

3 pm **Depart for Gates of the Mountains Boat Tour**

The 120-minute cruise starts at the Gates of the Mountains Marina, 3 miles off Interstate 15 in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains between Helena and Great Falls. Aboard a comfortable open-air boat (covered in case of rain), you'll glide through magnificent country Meriwether Lewis would still recognize if he could return.

From the vessel you can see Mann Gulch, the site of the raging forest fire that killed 13 smokejumpers, August 5, 1949. This tragedy was the main subject matter of Norman Maclean's book "Young Men and Fire". The tragic story of Mann Gulch is retold by the guide and pilot.

Near Mann Gulch the pilot will hug the shoreline to give you a look at Indian pictographs painted on the rock wall. Proof that indigenous people lived here long before Meriwether named it the Gates of the Mountains.

The tour's main attraction, though, is the inexhaustible scenery – wooded slopes, rugged rock formations, and the placid beauty of the timeless Missouri.

7:30 pm **MAJOR AWARDS DINNER**

Presentation of major awards in the Ballroom of the Delta Colonial Hotel



MNA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday 6/17/23

9 am **Montana Newspaper Foundation Annual Meeting**

10 am – 11 am **BRIGHT IDEAS ROUNDTABLE**

Who knows the Montana market better than our own MNA members? This popular session is back. We ask our members to bring their best new revenue ideas to share with their colleagues. This session is sure to give attendees some ideas to take back to give their revenue a fresh bump for the second half of the year. Bring your ideas and your energy for lively discussion. Prizes will be given for the top ideas offered at the session.

11 am – 12 pm **TRAINING AT YOUR FINGERTIPS**

Training and developing staff is always a challenge and this session outlines some MNA resources that have been added to make that task easier in 2023. Representatives of Earn Your Press Pass and On Campus will join us to discuss how our members can get the most out of their training modules. Earn Your Press was designed for smaller papers that, in this tight job market, often hire staffers with little or no journalism training. Earn Your Press Pass offers a series of sessions that will train new staffers in journalism basics. On Campus takes a broader look, offering a complete library of training sessions in advertising, marketing, circulation and news. Coming off the MNA's successful April news training day, Brian Allfrey and Jim Strauss also will solicit ideas for the coming fall advertising training day and for other future MNA training sessions.

12 pm – 1 pm **Past President's Lunch**

1 pm – 1:30 pm **MNA / MNAS ANNUAL MEETING**

1:45 pm – 2:30 pm **DIGITAL WITHOUT DISTRACTION**

Embracing digital doesn't mean abandoning print. News and sales attendees will uncover digital growth opportunities within reach by identifying opportunities to enhance their digital portfolios while maintaining a strong focus on print publishing. Discover how to navigate emerging and established trends, gaining valuable insights for small and medium publishers. Uncover actionable strategies and best practices that can be implemented this summer, including content strategy, effective utilization of paywalls, optimizing newsletters and social media, and leveraging readership data. Don't miss this opportunity to strike the perfect balance between digital expansion and print excellence. Session presenter will be Kyle Rickhoff, digital architect with Align Simple. Kyle is a driven and passionate leader with an entrepreneurial mindset known for optimizing efficiency and big-picture thinking.

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm **BREAK**

2:45 pm – 4 pm **HOW TO SELL MORE OF WHAT YOU HAVE**

Driving digital revenue does not always mean introducing new products, services, or widgets. In this seminar, we will discuss how to empower your sales strategy by focusing on your basic tools and assets to increase sales. So, join us as we explore turning your typical digital inventory into increased digital revenue opportunities and community partnerships. But what is a seminar without action? At the end of the seminar, we will equip you with key next steps to take back to your team. Session presenter will be Arcadea Scott of Align Simple. Arcadea is a sales and communication strategist with experience leading local and national sales teams. She brings seasoned knowledge and innovation to sales departments to create new revenue streams and activate strategic partners.

5:30 pm – 6:30 pm **Social Hour**

Join us for Social Hour prior to the Awards Dinner for Drinks and Fun

6:30 pm – 9 pm **BNC Awards Dinner**

Presentation of the BNC Awards in the Banquet Room of the Delta Colonial Hotel.



AUCTION ITEMS NEEDED TO SUPPORT JOURNALISM

The popular Montana Newspaper Foundation auction is back for this year's MNA convention June 16 and 17 in Helena.

Auction proceeds help fund scholarships for UM journalism students, scholarships for Montana high school students pursuing journalism as a career, internships for MNA members, training for MNA members and other efforts that advance Montana journalism.

Help support and build Montana journalism by donating an item. Especially encouraged are items unique to Montana and your community, Show your local pride. All items are welcome.

If you can donate an item for this year's auction, please email Jim Strauss at jim.strauss@mtnewspapers.com by June 8. You can bring the item to the auction or ship it to Jim at P.O. Box 193, Seeley Lake, MT 59868.

Questions? Call Jim: 406-531-9543.

silent

AUCTION

HOTEL ROOM BLOCK EXPIRES 5/31/23

**The Montana
Newspaper Association
will hold its Annual
Conference at the Delta
Colonial Hotel in Helena
June 16-17, 2023.**



[BOOK YOUR HOTEL ROOMS HERE](#)

HOTEL CUT OFF DATE IS 5/31/23

MULLEN NEWSPAPER CO. APPOINTS NEW CEO

Alex Barta was announced as the new chief executive officer of Mullen Newspaper Company on May 17.

Barta was director of operations for Mullen Newspaper's Idaho publications based in St. Maries, Idaho. Outgoing CEO and company founder Jesse Mullen will remain with Mullen Newspapers in a limited new role prioritizing the company's future growth.

"Alex has proven with our Idaho operations that he is a competent news executive by growing his publications nearly 20 percent in the last two years with print advertising revenue," Jesse said. "His print-focused sales efforts revitalized his operation and his passion for the work is inspiring."

Chief Operating Officer and Mullen Newspaper co-owner Lloyd Mullen will remain the COO.

"Alex is a natural leader," Lloyd said. "He's worked from the ground up in the newspaper industry from an ad rep heading door to door making cold calls to a publisher growing a solid team for his community newspaper. "He's the guy you want in your corner, and we're lucky enough to have him in ours."

Barta will remain in St. Maries, where he lives with his wife and children.

Mullen Newspaper manages 20 print newspapers in six western states. More information can be found at mullennewspapers.com



5 MNA members land internship grants

The Montana Newspaper Foundation awarded five \$2,000 grants to help fund summer internships.

MNA members winning the grants were the Boulder Monitor, the Lake County Leader, the Tobacco Valley News, the Cascade Courier and the Daily Inter Lake. The MNA will be sending payment to the winners.

Seven Montana Newspaper Association members applied for the grants. A committee made up of MNA and MNF board members ranked internship applications based on experience the intern would have, the newspaper's relative need, and the quality of mentorship.

Ranking committee members were: MNA President George Hoffman, MNA Immediate Past President Chad Knudson, MNF member John Adams, MNA board member Jeff Welsch and MNA/MNAS board member Darla Downs.

"The Montana Newspaper Foundation takes very seriously its mission to support education and investment in the field of journalism," said MNF President Melody Martinsen.

The MNF board unanimously approved raising the internship grant amount from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for 2023 and expanded the number of internships from three to five.

"These grants allow Montana newspapers to bring students into their operations, giving these students great real-world experience and helping them satisfy internship requirements at their schools," said Martinsen, who is editor and co-owner of the Choteau Acantha.

"The students in turn often bring cutting-edge ideas and best practices from the university level to the newspapers, helping Montana's newspapers freshen their design, improve their use of social media and digital resources and tackle important projects that they may not have the regular staffing to do," she said.

The internship grants are a great way for the MNF to give back to the newspapers who support the nonprofit organization through donations and fundraising events. Congratulations to this year's five internship grant recipients.



Hectic 2023 legislative session closes

It was a busy session for Montana Newspaper Association members.

MNA lobbyist Rob Cook, a former Republican legislator in Montana, worked to track bills affecting the newspaper industry. Jim Strauss, MNA director of communications & development, made regular trips to Helena to meet with legislators and to testify at hearings, representing MNA member interests.

Most effective, however, was the high level of involvement of MNA members. There is no substitute for local constituents meeting with their local legislators.

Thanks to MNA members who met personally with legislators, called them and emailed them to let them know of concerns with multiple bills. Having local newspapers talk with their local representatives is the most effective way to help shape legislation that affects our industry.

Here is a rundown of major bills and resolutions of note to MNA members:

- **HB 724:** This bill sponsored by Brad Barker (R) of Roberts seeks to expand government transparency by requiring that meeting agendas be available to the public prior to government meetings. It does not change public notice requirements. The bill requires government agencies to link to agendas, if the local county paper of record publishes meeting agendas at no cost. If the paper of record does not publish agendas for free, then the government agency is required to post the agenda on its website or on its social media site. The MNA worked with the sponsor to ensure it in no way affected public notice requirements. The bill passed and was signed by the governor.
- **SR 58:** This Senate resolution honored the late Chuck Johnson for his many contributions to Montana journalism and to the state of Montana. MNA testified in support. Resolution was passed and signed by the Senate president.
- **SR 53:** This Senate resolution honored the many contributions and accomplishments of recently retired journalist Mike Dennison. The MNA testified in support of the resolution. The resolution was adopted.
- **HB 351:** Would have prohibited print advertising for marijuana and greatly curtailed dispensaries' ability to sponsor events and use digital marketing. The MNA and an MNA member testified at two hearings in opposition to the bill. Numerous calls and emails also were made to committee members, encouraging votes against the bill. This bill was passed out of the House but was tabled by the Senate Business, Labor and Economic Affairs committee on a 10-0 vote. It died in standing committee.
- **HB 855:** This legislation will provide a plaque or other form of tribute commemorating Chuck Johnson. Rep. Laura Smith, a Helena Democrat, is the sponsor. The MNA testified in support of the bill. Bill passed and was signed by governor.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

MONTANA LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP CONTINUED

- **HB 103:** Would have eliminated the Montana Board of County Printing, which sets rates for legal advertising, and put the rate decisions under the purview of the Department of Administration. The MNA testified against this bill at its hearing and numerous MNA members stepped forward to contact their local representatives serving on the committee. HB 103 was voted down 19-0 in committee and tabled. Bill died in standing committee.
- **HB 125:** Allows the Department of Commerce to post some meetings on its website without publishing public notices in newspapers of record. The MNA met with the bill sponsor, and he agreed to amend the bill to retain the requirement for publishing these notices in Montana newspapers of record. Bill passed and was signed by the governor.
- **HB 108:** Would have allowed Department of Revenue other options for posting notices of hour changes and no longer require such notices be published in newspapers of record. The MNA met with the sponsor, and he agreed to amend the bill to retain the requirement for publishing these notices in Montana newspapers of record. Bill was tabled and died in standing committee.
- **HB 136:** Eliminates requirement for Department of Revenue publishing an annual section of unclaimed property. The DOR is developing a website to list all unclaimed property and wants this to be a continual rather than annual process for alerting the public of unclaimed property. The MNA met with the bill sponsor, and she agreed to amend the bill, requiring that ads be placed in all Montana newspapers of record quarterly, alerting the public to check the DOR website for unclaimed property. The bill was passed and signed by the governor.
- **SB 5:** This bill allows Montana counties without a newspaper of record to post public notices in alternative manners, rather than having to publish the notice in an adjacent county. The MNA supports this bill and testified in favor of it. This bill was the result of months of meetings with an interim committee that was considering changing legal notice publication requirements for newspapers of record. This bill preserves the requirement for legal notices to be published in all Montana counties with newspapers of record. Multiple MNA members appeared before the interim committee testifying on the importance of public notices. The bill passed and was signed by the governor.

MNAS SEEKS BOARD MEMBERS

The Montana Newspaper Advertising Service needs new members to fill open board positions.

The board meets quarterly, reviewing sales results, developing new programs and working with MNA members and staff to build sales results for its members.

The MNAS works to have a mix of weekly and daily sales managers from across the state to develop the best sales strategies.

If you would like to join, please contact:

- MNA Executive Director Brian Allfrey at: ed@mtnewspapers.com or
- MNAS President Jeff Martinsen at: tetonads@3rivers.net.



MNA letter protests limited media access for House Judiciary Committee hearing

The Montana Newspaper Association sent a letter of protest to Montana House leadership after journalists' access was limited during a committee hearing late in the 2023 session of the Legislature.

The House Judiciary Committee meeting of May 1 was of high interest because committee member Rep. Zooley Zephyr, who had been banished from the floor, was allowed to attend.

Journalists were removed from the public area of the committee meeting when attempting to take notes. Media were not given access to the public area and only gained access when agreeing they would not take notes.

Though there have been no repeat occurrences, this action set a precedent of great concern to Montana media. The Montana Newspaper Association, the Montana State News Bureau and the Montana Broadcasters Association jointly sent a letter of protest May 4. Several MNA members also asked to be listed separately to underscore their concern.

The letter was sent to Speaker Matt Regier, Majority Leader Sue Vinton, Minority Leader Kim Abbott, House Judiciary Chair Amy Regier, Vice Chair Laurie Bishop and Vice Chair Brandon Ler would be copied on the letter. Here is an excerpt from the letter:

The Montana Capitol press corps recognizes both the access we are allowed through Montana's robust public access laws, as well as our ability to extend the public's eyes and ears over their elected officials through the credentialing process we comply with to gain that access each session.

The press has worked in good faith to comply with decorum rules and requirements and be respectful of legislators while also fully performing our jobs. In return, we expect to be able to cover hearings, floor sessions and other public proceedings in person to gain the necessary context for our coverage.

Journalists were removed from the public area of the House Judiciary Committee meeting May 1 when attempting to take notes. This had the effect of stripping press access for all media outlets from this space. The limitation on use of note-taking materials or laptops was not a rule that had been implemented previously in the session or applied to others attending meetings, such as lobbyists, agency officials and employees or the public.

During the 2023 session of the Montana Legislature, media members have been good stewards by following credentialing and access guidelines. We are committed to working within those guidelines to bring the important news of the Montana Legislature to our readers and viewers across the state. We want to ensure we have an understanding about the access needed to do our work.

We look forward to discussing this and gaining clarification of ensuring the access we need to complete our vital jobs and make sure the public has the ability to understand the critical work you perform on their behalf in the Capitol.

The letter was signed by Holly Michels, head of the Montana State News Bureau, and Jim Strauss, MNA communications & development director. The MNA will work with the Montana State News Bureau and the MBA to set up a follow-up meeting to ensure better access and to build better relations with the Legislature going forward.



EXCELLENCE IN MONTANA JOURNALISM

Gazette photographer Larry Mayer receives Congressional citation for spy balloon photo

Courtesy of Lee Enterprises

Longtime Billings Gazette photographer Larry Mayer received a Congressional citation for his photo of the Chinese spy balloon that passed over Montana in February.

Working together with Billings videographer Chase Doak, the pair documented the balloon with a photo and video that were quickly shared by news outlets around the world.

President Joe Biden had hoped the spy balloon would go unnoticed as Secretary of State Antony Blinken prepared for a diplomatic mission to China. Chinese military officials claimed the balloon was a weather research balloon that had simply blown off course.

Pentagon officials held a press conference confirming the illegal foreign balloon's surveillance and navigational capabilities. And, Montana officials were especially alarmed at the balloon's passage over the state's nuclear missile silos.

Political heat generated by Mayer's photograph, and its revelation of China's spying efforts, forced the hasty cancellation of Blinken's China visit.

"Larry pointed his lens skyward...and captured one of the first public images of a strange object floating in American skies," states the Congressional citation signed by Montana Rep. Matt Rosendale (R).

"Larry's images of the Chinese spy balloon represent the best qualities of American journalism," the citation continues.

After the spy balloon was shot down Feb. 4, Mayer was interviewed by dozens of U.S. and foreign news outlets, including an appearance on France's ARTE TV for a program on the impact of historic photographs.

"I appreciate the balloon story becoming part of the Congressional Record and in the permanent collection of the Library of Congress," Mayer said.

Mayer also recently received the National Security Citizen of the Year award from the National Heritage Foundation