



Montana Trooper

President's Message



Sgt. Art Collins
President
AMT

Fellow members,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the opportunity to visit with you last spring. Unfortunately, I was unable to make the district meetings in Great Falls or Glendive. I would be happy to attend at a later time if the opportunity presents itself. I really enjoyed the chance to travel the state to see you all and hear your comments and concerns. I hope this is just the beginning of a new tradition in the Highway Patrol. Our chances at continued success in the future as a state agency, labor union, and Association are greatly enhanced by our ability to work together toward common goals.

Over the next several months, your Association board along with Mark

Taylor and Jessie Luther will be looking for ways to bring our current retirement system back to actuarial soundness. In the process of doing this, we hope to also improve the system to benefit its members (you). By now everyone will have had the opportunity to provide their input through an online survey Jessie Luther put together. For those of you who took the time to complete the survey, THANK YOU! Without your thoughtful feedback, making these decisions would be a lot more difficult. I don't know how this will all turn out, but your AMT board and I feel very strongly about being proactive in these matters. One thing I am sure of, this effort will only be successful through the cooperation of the Department of Justice, MHP Administration, MPEA, and the AMT, much the same as the passage of HB 35.

In happier but no less important news, the Hope Project Summer Reunion in Essex was an absolute success. This year we had nearly 30 recipient families attend. This is nearly double the number of families we have had attend the last few years. One of the highlights this

year was the evening entertainment. Trooper Toby Baukema's and Sgt. Cal Schock's musical talents were on display after dinner Saturday night and were a big hit with those who found them playing in the hotel lobby. Hopefully, next year the weather will be more cooperative, and we can have them lead a campfire sing-a-long. I really can't thank these two guys enough for sharing their talents with us. It's great to see troopers getting more involved in this and other Hope Project events. This can be a truly rewarding experience for you and your family.

To all of you who tossed your hat in the ring to become an AMT district representative during the recent elections, THANK YOU! I wish that everyone who had an interest could be a voting board member, but for obvious reasons that can't be. The future of this organization is dependent upon new members taking a genuine interest in what we are doing. With that in mind, feel free to contact me or your district representative with any questions, concerns, or ideas you may have.

Until next time, be safe. □





Montana Trooper

From the Attorney General



Montana
Attorney General
Steve Bullock

Vehicle Division has made its new computer system, MERLIN, accomplish what was initially promised – a 21st Century computer system that

allows vehicle owners online access to many services, and that ties together all the transactions related to a particular driver in one stable database.

DOJ: GREAT PEOPLE DOING GREAT WORK

Serving as Montana's Attorney General has been an amazing experience for me. My oldest daughter was just a first grader when I was first sworn in. This fall, Caroline will be starting fifth grade!

Despite how quickly the past four years have gone by, we can all be proud of what we at the Department of Justice have accomplished during this time.

- The 24/7 Sobriety Program is up, running and keeping repeat drunk drivers sober in counties all throughout the state.
- The Prescription Drug Registry now allows the health care professionals who prescribe potentially addictive drugs to check a patient's medication history online.
- The Montana Crime Lab is now accredited at the highest level, with full international accreditation.
- Through the Children's Justice Center, we are successfully finding and prosecuting child predators – including those who look for victims online – and we're improving forensic evidence collection and interviewing, all while responding to child victims in a more compassionate, coordinated way.
- We created a new Sex and Violent Offender Compliance Unit that is working with local authorities to track down non-compliant sex offenders and verify their addresses.
- And through an incredible number of hours and an equally incredible amount of determination, the Motor



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This spring, the Motor Vehicle Division and the Patrol announced another new service – an online insurance verification tool that troopers throughout the state are now accessing from their cruisers. As the name suggests, the new Montana Insurance Verification System, or MTIVS, enables law enforcement to do a roadside check to see if a driver has liability insurance.

The new system was designed to eliminate the guess work in determining whether a motorist has the liability insurance Montana law requires – even if they can't find a current insurance card in their glove box. By allowing an online check based on the vehicle's license plate number or the driver's name, MTIVS now allows troopers and other law enforcement officers to base their decision on whether to issue a warning or a ticket on accurate, real-time information.

I've heard some positive feedback from troopers that MTIVS has saved them from writing tickets for people who did have insurance, and has encouraged drivers who didn't have it to "fess up." Trooper Gleich reported a stop in which a driver said his insurance card was on his table at home, but when Gleich let him know he could check, the driver suddenly recalled that he thought his insurance had lapsed.

Too often, troopers see the consequences of drivers who choose to flout Montana law and go without insurance. When they cause an accident that injures other motorists or totals someone else's vehicle, the innocent party has to make a claim on their own insurance, potentially increasing their rates even though they didn't cause the crash. With the new system in place, we expect to see a gradual decrease in the number of people who drive without insurance.

Looking back, it wasn't too long ago that the Montana Highway Patrol had serious problems recruiting and retaining troopers because the salaries the Patrol could pay didn't begin to compete with those paid by local law enforcement agencies. A salary survey conducted in 2004 found that entry-level Patrol troopers were paid \$9,360 less per year than the average entry-level officer in the eight county sheriffs' departments where the Patrol's headquarters and district offices were located.

Those days are gone. Thanks to House Bill 35 passed by the 2005 Legislature, with the support of the Association of Troopers, the Patrol is no longer a de facto training ground for local agencies. And while other state employees have seen their pay frozen for four years (from 2009 to 2012), in accordance with

the Patrol's alternate pay plan, troopers have received significant raises that appropriately acknowledge the important public safety work they do.

The timing couldn't have been better. With the full implementation of HB 35 over the past four years and the efficiencies achieved through Smart Cop, we have been able to put more troopers on the road. This has been especially important in responding to the oil and gas development and the associated population boom in Eastern Montana. The new troopers assigned to this region will help the Patrol keep its response times relatively low and ensure that the exponential increase in the number of big trucks on the road doesn't endanger public safety.

I've been proud of my association with Montana's Highway Patrol, of your fine reputation, and your unparalleled commitment to public safety. Thank you for the important work you do and for the integrity with which you carry it out every day. □



Montana Trooper

Colonel's Message



Colonel
Mike Tooley

One of the things I appreciate about writing these messages for the AMT magazine is that it forces me to think about not only the current issues, but those that I expect to be relevant nearly six months from now when the magazine is published.

The biggest issue six months from now will be the outcome of the general election. This will be the point of decision to determine the head of our parent agency, the Department of Justice. At the same time, the legislators who will make up the 2013 session will be chosen. In January of 2013, the new Attorney General will be given his or her oath a mere two hours before the legislative session begins. I expect that there

will also be a few new faces at the heads of DOJ divisions taking their offices at that same time. It will be an exciting, confusing, and challenging time in history.

I have been fortunate to watch these events from the perspective of being an employee of the DOJ since 1982. The benefit of that experience is that I know for a fact that our organization will remain valued and effective, as we have been for seventy-seven years. Groups such as the Association of Montana Troopers ensure that important historical perspectives remain regardless of political change. In one of the first articles I wrote as Colonel, I believe that I stated that in order to know where you are going, you need to know where you have been. During these times of change, that is the focus that needs to be maintained.

I know that some feel that the AMT should not be involved in the political process. However, if the Association does not work to make sure that their voice is heard, then there is the danger that your issues will not be deemed

important. Your issues are important, and being involved the way that your Association leadership has chosen has protected your interests. I believe that they have managed to walk a very fine line that leaves the Association in a strong position.

Former Colonel Driscoll was fond of saying, "Adversity creates opportunity." While change isn't always adverse, it almost always creates opportunity, if you are looking for it. If the AMT and MHP maintain their focus through these changes, there is no reason why the organization shouldn't benefit from them. Be present, be ready, and know where you want to go. If you are ready and have focus, the challenges that might come up during the 2013 legislative session will be met successfully.

Until the next time, thank you for the work that the Association continues to do to support our active MHP troopers and our honored retirees. Whatever your status, continue to be involved and stay safe.

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