

[https://missoulian.com/opinion/columnists/guest-view-aiming-to-earn-hope/article\\_bc662502-c486-5d87-8d62-297f6401a9aa.html](https://missoulian.com/opinion/columnists/guest-view-aiming-to-earn-hope/article_bc662502-c486-5d87-8d62-297f6401a9aa.html)

GUEST VIEW

## Guest view: Aiming to earn hope

**AMBER SHERRILL, AMY CILIMBURG, BRYAN VON LOSSBERG and four other signers**

Nov 10, 2022

**C**limate impacts are all around us — storms, drought, record temperatures. Climate solutions are also, though sometimes you have to look harder to notice them. Many in our community are re-imagining a safer and more equitable world.

As local climate leaders, we're constantly looking for ideas, inspirations, and paths forward by working together and talking to folks across Missoula County and beyond.

Earlier this fall we attended Mountain Towns 2030, a conference that brings local government, nonprofits, and utilities together to foster climate leadership and collaboration. We left Colorado re-connected and feeling more hopeful than we'd imagined.

### **Urgency and agency**

These two words feature prominently and guide our renewed hopefulness. Why? In short, we know that we still have a window of opportunity to get this right and avoid climate catastrophe — and for the first time, we can pair that opportunity with significant federal resources to implement the core solutions. More and more people are joining the team, too — more towns, more elected officials, more community leaders, and more businesses are acting with resolve to build a better future.

---

---

We heard from renowned climate scientist Dr. Michael Mann, who emphasized the urgency that we keep fossil fuels in the ground, while also sharing new scientific projections that are actually less dire than recently understood. Yes, we're seeing climate impacts sooner than many anticipated, yet the projections have scaled back the likelihood of runaway temperature rises this century, especially if we act now to reduce emissions. Not exactly comforting, but in contrast to just a few years ago, more hopeful!

In addition to this encouraging news, we heard from local governments across the Intermountain West who are taking bold action, ranging from small towns like Eagle, Colorado, (population 6900) to big cities like Denver (population 716,000). No matter the size, every community present was committed to tackling the problems ahead of us, and they weren't going it alone. Investor-owned and cooperative utilities shared the stage to discuss the ways in which they are working with communities to leverage renewable energy, energy efficiency, and storage to achieve their goals of providing affordable and reliable service.

Nearly every presenter and attendee was abuzz with excitement over the Inflation Reduction Act, a transformational piece of climate policy that will slingshot us closer to our goals than we've ever been before. How effective these investments are is largely up to us as local and regional communities - how creative, collaborative, and imaginative can we be with the funding available, the private capital it could bring, and the transitions it will inspire? We know we need affordable, all-electric buildings powered with renewable energy, sited on streets that invite you to bike, walk, or bus.

That future is possible when we work together to bring resources to the table, strengthen partnerships, and think holistically to address climate, housing, and economic development simultaneously.

We still have a chance at a safe, livable, and equitable future. To realize it, we need to:

- Develop or strengthen public-private partnerships
- Use policy to leverage new resources
- Multi-solve, integrating climate solutions with housing and economic development
- Accelerate this work, without delay

## **Hope is earned**

We are often asked if we're hopeful. Sometimes we respond: "we're simply resolved." But during the conference, professional photographer Peter McBride answered this question by offering, "Hope is earned." Help do the work that needs to be done, and then you'll have earned your hope. This resonates!

We aim to earn more hope every day, and to share the work and hope with all of Missoula County. In the weeks and months to come we'll offer ideas for you to join us. We'll need all of us.

Amber Sherrill, Missoula City Council; Amy Cilimburg, Climate Smart Missoula; Bryan von Lossberg, Missoula consultant; Caroline Bean, Missoula County staff; Dave Strohmaier, Missoula County Commissioner; Evora Glenn, City of Missoula staff; Josh Slotnick, Missoula County Commissioner