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HUMAN RIGHTS NETWORK

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For Immediate Release Press Briefing on Extremist Event in Kalispell

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Anti-Government & Religious Right Extremist Hold Gathering & Book Burning in Kalispell

The Flathead Valley will once again become the [gathering](#) place for far right activists this weekend. The “God and Country Conference” will run Friday through Sunday and feature local and national extremists rallying against the government, promoting “confrontational evangelism” and concluding with a book burning.

“This weekend’s gathering sounds like a take-your-pick mix of hate. They will be picking on everything and everyone from the federal government, the separation of church and state, Catholics, Mormons, LGBT people, liberals, and Forest Service,” said Rachel Carroll Rivas, Co-Director at the Montana Human Rights Network “It sounds like a pretty small party with a list like that. All that is left is a few angry people with an extremely narrow interpretation of the Bible and revisionist view of the Constitution, both of which they use to justify denying a lot of people respect and equal rights.”

The event features: anti-government activist Chuck Baldwin; a variety of pastors from out-of-state talking about public displays of religious doctrine; a “street-protesting” hate-group preacher from California; a cross carrying to a Ten Commandment park dedication; a book burning on Sunday night; and representatives of the Liberty Institute, which has aligned with Montana Supreme Court candidate [Lawrence VanDyke in three conservative Christian legal cases](#).

“To top it all off, they are holding an old-fashioned book burning at the end, just to make sure they’ve offended everyone. We’ve called out the extremism of activists like Chuck Baldwin before but this event just points out that Baldwin and his associates are far from mainstream and represent the fringe,” said Carroll-Rivas

Montana and the Flathead Valley have been a particular focus for activism and relocation for the far right anti-government and white supremacist movements. Local human rights activists have responded in recent years to this activity by forming Love Lives Here, whose mission is co-creating a caring, open, accepting and diverse community, free from discrimination and dedicated to equal treatment for all our citizens. Love Lives Here has not only held counter protests to white supremacist actions, but put on a variety of positive community activities including an annual Doctor King Celebration and dedication of a community peace monument in Kalispell.

Love Lives Here Co-Chair Will Randall said of the “God and Country” event, “This gathering is offensive to just about everyone, and it just confirms the need for groups like Love Lives Here that promote Kalispell as an inclusive and welcoming community.”

The [event](#) is being held at the former Evergreen Alliance Church, on the edge of Kalispell which is now owned by Philip Klevmoen, a Creston rancher that founded God’s Ten. The organization focuses on public displays of religious messages including the Ten Commandments.

Speakers at the “God and Country Conference” include:

Chuck Baldwin, a [national activist](#) in the anti-government “Patriot” movement who relocated his family to Montana in 2010. He runs Liberty Fellowship, which preaches an apocalyptic anti-government religion. Baldwin’s speech this weekend is to focus on his efforts to allow more politicized churches by changing their tax status. His arrival in the Flathead Valley was applauded by the local white supremacists, including [April Gaede](#) whom [claims](#) to have been moved to tears by his sermons. In 2008 he was the presidential candidate for the hard-right [Constitution Party, which combines rabid Christian fundamentalism with many themes of the anti-government movement](#). Baldwin has a rich [history](#) of promoting radical ideas and associating with other fringe groups, including the [Oath Keepers](#) run by Stewart Rhoades, another recent transplant to the Flathead Valley who spent the [spring](#) in a stand-off with the government at the Cliven Bundy ranch in Nevada. Baldwin is considered by the Southern Poverty Law Center as an [extremist](#) in the “Patriot” movement. Baldwin’s son, Tim, has also been a [mainstay](#) in Montana politics and right-wing movements; including failed runs for the Flathead Valley Community College’s Board of Trustees and the Montana Legislature.

Ruben Israel (Chavez), a street preacher who advocates in-your-face evangelism. Israel Chavez, of Los Angeles, coordinates the group Bible Believers, which engages in protests and runs a [website](#) that purposely offends and attacks: [Mormons](#), “drunkards,” Mardi Gras, “homo sex,” “Pot Smoking Devils,” Catholics, President Obama, peace activists, Billy Graham, Free Masons, Southern Baptists, and Oprah Winfrey, among others. This weekend he will be speaking about “confrontational evangelism” and has advertised a Sunday night “OFFICIAL BOOK BURN,” which encourages people to bring items from books to DVDs to clothing from home. He suggests that if “you are embarrassed, put items in a pillow case.”

Micheal Berry is with the Liberty Institute. Berry is a conservative Southern Baptist talk radio host and real estate developer in Texas. In 2010 he was criticized for advocating violence against other religions when he [said](#), but later apologized for saying, “I hope that someone blows it up” about a Muslim community center near Ground Zero in New York. The Liberty Institute is a Texas-based organization that uses the guise of religious liberty to [justify](#) anti-gay discrimination and [promote](#) far-right candidates like Sarah Palin. They are an arm of Free Market Foundation, which is associated with evangelical leader James Dobson’s Focus on the Family. They are currently [working with the Knights of Columbus](#) to allow a statue of Jesus on public land at Big Mountain. The Liberty Institute and their President and CEO have aligned efforts with current Montana Supreme Court candidate, Lawrence VanDyke in three conservative Christian legal cases.¹

Rick Nelson is an attorney with American Liberties Institute out of Florida. He is a [grant recipient](#) and allied attorney of Alliance Defending Freedom (formerly Alliance Defense Fund) and has represented a variety of [conservative](#) religious [causes](#). Alliance Defending Freedom is an Arizona-based anti-choice, anti-gay organization that focuses on legal challenges related issues. It was founded by a few [high profile conservative religious Right leaders like James Dobson of](#) Focus on the Family.

Wally Smith, a pastor with House of Israel Christian fellowship in Las Vegas. The fellowship is a messianic Christian church that includes [links](#) on its own website to the conservative conspiratorial “birther” site wnd.com, which continues to question President Obama’s citizenship and birth records. The religion believes in Jesus as Messiah but follow a Jewish lifestyle and culture, while at the same time embracing Christian theology.

Jeanette Golden, whom is challenging a Texas law that manages the placement of highway signs and advertising, including her own Ten Commandments sign. Michael Berry and the Liberty Institute are [representing her](#) in the case. The current law was constitutionally upheld in 2003 by the Texas Supreme Court.

Jim Huff, the pastor of First Bible Presbyterian Church of Kalispell and local conservative anti-choice [activist](#).

¹ <http://www.supreme.courts.state.tx.us/ebriefs/11/11007903.pdf>
<https://www.libertyinstitute.org/document.doc?id=24>
[Freedom from Religion vs Flathead National Forest and Knights of Columbus](#)