

## Welcoming Cities, the NDO, and Progressive Politics

*If Billings is the most affordable city in the state and recreational opportunities abound, what makes the Magic City so unwelcoming?*

Dick Pence – Big Sky Worldview Forum

(See information at [bigskyworldview.org](http://bigskyworldview.org) under Resources/Library)

Is Billings a welcoming city to potential newcomers? During the recent Billings City Council election, this question was the constant drum beat of the Progressive candidates. Their answer? NO, Billings is unwelcoming and our economy is being hurt because people would not want to move here – especially Millennials. This accusation does not end at the city limits - its implications affect the entire trade area.

How do you make such an evaluation – what factors do you consider? *Subjective* answers vary widely. Most people that I know would say our area is welcoming. In a Gazette article [View From Billings Ward 1](#), a Councilperson continued this drum beat.

*“Billings is competing with Bozeman, Missoula, and other cities for young talent... Billings needs to be more welcoming of new people.”*

**There was a significant portion of Socialist rhetoric** in the election and the unspoken goal is [turning Yellowstone County BLUE](#). This LINK takes you to an effort coordinated by another Councilperson about a year ago. Their goal? To invoke the will of the [National Institute for Reproductive Health](#) on our area – an Abortion/LGBT Activist/Social Justice group.

NDO (Non-Discrimination Ordinance) proponents have acknowledged that their divisive 2014 NDO battle probably cost Billings the Public Safety initiative. For all their talk about public safety, the underlying issue in every ward was the same as it was the prior election - promotion of an NDO. Now, Councilwoman Penny Ronning is bringing the NDO back, cleverly relabeled a *Welcoming and Diversity Ordinance*. This would give the LGBT community a **‘Protected Class’** status legally - equal with race. We will analyze their arguments in a minute.

There is a delicate balance between treating the larger LGBT community well and resisting LGBT activists that have openly stated, for decades, that their objective

goes far beyond NDO's to the [complete transformation](#) of the moral base of America. And you can, [follow the money](#)! In reality, their devices are not focused on the long-term flourishing of those they claim to champion, but rather the same radical LEFT agenda you see playing out in Washington D. C.

Using a little *objectivity*, let's look briefly at factors that would seem to invite or welcome people to the Magic City.

**Welcoming, from the Perspective of economics and livability**, looks good for Billings. In [2018, Livability.com](#) ranked Billings as the most affordable city in the state. **Household income** was \$49,260 for Billings and \$46,426 for Bozeman. Missoula was not listed, but the county data reveals a much lower income. [Housing costs](#) would be a consideration. According to Smartasset.com, in 2019 Billings average rent was \$1,012, the mean home value was \$209K. Missoula – rent was \$1,035 and mean home value \$334K. Bozeman came in at a whopping \$1,250 for rent and \$452K for home values. **Home ownership** for the three cities were Billings 61%, Missoula 45%, and Bozeman 40%. [Taxes](#), the City of Missoula Finance Department shows tax revenue per capita taken from citizens as: Billings \$450, Missoula \$479, and Bozeman a whopping \$660 per capita. WinCo Foods chose Billings over Bozeman because it was more business friendly – less regulations.

Billings enjoys a milder year-round climate, is located at the intersection of two interstate highways, has the largest medical centers between Seattle and Minneapolis, its airport is 15 minutes from the business sector, it is a trade destination for northern Wyoming and western North Dakota, and our recreational opportunities close by are numerous. If you're going to talk about "welcoming" in terms of budgetary factor, Billings looks pretty good.

**Progressive agendas relate more to power schemes.** Their arguments about welcoming do not relate to economic considerations. If you do a little data mining on elections, it is obvious that without Bozeman and Missoula, the last Senatorial election would have been much different. Take a trip to Helena when the legislature is in session. You will see the Human Rights Commission, Planned Parenthood, Progressive groups like Forward Montana and the ACLU, and numerous LGBT activist groups marching in lock-step to promote their mutual agendas. Progressive power is now centered on abortion on demand, LGBT

rights, and these group's alleged impact on state and city economies. At a recent Billings Chamber board meeting, one member had the audacity to suggest that there is not a coordinated National-State-Local effort to promote LGBT agendas like NDO's! Sorry, Chamber, the public is not that stupid anymore.

**Progressives are now focusing on Billings** because their efforts have stalled out in other communities and at the state level. In fact, the Pro-LGBT web [site Freedom for All Americans](#) shows that 30 states have no statewide NDO - Montana is in the majority. And, except of a lame-duck in Utah, it has been ten years since they gained a state.

Interestingly, in 2014 Alliance Defending Freedom outlined [Ten Rights of Conscience cases](#). Nine of the cases involved suits where businesses were sued for not accommodating LGBT demands. These were cases where the businesses had contested that accommodating the LGBT demand would violate their sincerely held religious beliefs. Eight of nine of those cases were in states where there WAS a statewide NDO – N.M., CO, WA, HI, OR, NY, VT, and NJ. Any honest person who follows the LGBT activists, knows that one of their targets is getting statewide NDO's. Reality is, this is what is happening in Billings – creating a mandate for the legislature in 2020.

**The Progressives argument for an NDO** was spearheaded by former Councilman Brent Cromley in a [presentation to the Council](#) February 3<sup>rd</sup>. Putting their thumb on the scales again, the Gazette just happened to be at a meeting [where NDO Supporters Were Refining Their Arguments](#). The arguments are the same.

Cromley's arguments? Billings is not welcoming and, therefore, not growing and is economically threatened because we discriminate against the LGBT community. His bottom line was that cities with an NDO are growing and those without are not.

Next, using data from a tiny [Harris poll paid for by GLADD](#) (Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) he argued that now, 20% of Millennials identify as LGBTQ. And, they are choosing not to come to our trade area because we are not "tolerant." Peer reviewed social science data sets the population identifying as LGBT at 2-4 percent. One third of one percent experience Gender Dysphoria - Transgender tendencies. What would catapult this figure from a max of 4 to 20%? Cromley argues it is because public acceptance has increased, Gays are

more forthcoming. If true, then he is stuck arguing that 20% of the population has *always* been Gay. That's 1 in 5 instead of 3 in a hundred!

**Cromley's suggestion that NDO's drive growth** is problematic on several fronts. First, he ignores that old statistical axiom that *correlation does not equal causation*. But even his correlation is in trouble. If you looked, you noticed that he conveniently leaves out Kalispell, one of the fastest growing cities in America that has no NDO? He also conveniently fails to look at Yellowstone County growth.

In this article from Bozeman realtors (who traditionally support NDO's) [the Five Reasons Bozeman Is Growing](#) never mentions this LGBT agenda. If you look at the [Ten Fastest Growing Metropolitan](#) areas (Table 1) you can figure out that five of these cities do not have NDO's and six are in states that have no NDO. If you look at fastest growing states, 6 have NDO's and 4 do not.

But it gets worse for Cromley. National data in the SOGI (Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity) [Impact Infographic](#) is devastating to his argument. The Top Ten states for business, business climate, and growth predominately do not have state NDO's or Progressive leaders.

*“Proponents of adding sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) to state nondiscrimination laws claim they are good for business, but the facts say otherwise. Numerous studies suggest that states without these classifications actually have greater economic growth, while many states that have added these classifications to their laws have weaker economies and lower job growth.”*

My point? Cromley has cherry-picked data in favor of his case and ignored responsible statistical protocol.

**Progressive arguments from the Governor's office** during the state NDO issue at the legislature, suggested that N. Carolina was hurt by its [Bathroom Initiative](#). But Bullock's office was also long on bluster and short on facts as you see in this link. Their only data is the stuff they themselves have manufactured.

**Finally, the most compelling argument is common sense.** For all the stories you hear, both sides acknowledge that in the decade since Missoula passed its NDO (followed by Butte, Helena and Bozeman), the **Montana Human Rights Commission has not acted on one complaint of abuse** relative to the LGBT

community. Indisputably, this commission is very pro-LGBT and still, they have not found one case where the stories of abuse could be documented.

Amazingly, some NDO proponents have turned this issue on its head arguing that the fact that there are no cases is evidence we should just do it. Never mind that we usually don't make laws to prevent crimes that are not occurring.

**Alas, we are left with one clear conclusion.** The drive for an NDO is not about protecting the average Gay person. It is about a long term local, state, national and international agenda. I could quote LGBT activists for pages revealing their desire to turn our moral base up-side down. I offer just one. Respected lesbian journalist [Masha Gessen, she says](#):

“That they don't want to access the institution of marriage; they want to radically redefine and eventually eliminate it.”

And if you haven't, you should read the LGBT Manifesto from the 80's [The Overhauling of Straight America](#) - *A blueprint for transforming social values.*