



DIANE CARLSON EVANS | NOV. 10, 1946 – MAY 20, 2026

A ‘STORY OF SERVICE’



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Diane Carlson Evans poses for a photograph in Helena’s Memorial Park in this 2018 file photo.

Helena Vietnam veteran and Presidential Citizens Medal recipient dies at age 79

CHRISTINE COMPTON
christine.compton@helenair.com

There’s a statue of three uniformed women and a wounded man in Washington, D.C.

One nurse cradles the wounded soldier, a hand clasped over his injury and a solemn look on her face. Another looks to the sky, one palm on the first nurse’s arm as she stands guard. A third kneels with a helmet in her hand.

During the Vietnam Women’s Memorial location dedication, the statue’s main advocate, Diane Carlson Evans, stood humbly in the face of her many accolades, retired Army Col. Ray Read remembered. It was where they first met.

Hailing from Buffalo, Minnesota, but making Helena her latest home, Carlson Evans was a smart, kind-hearted woman who sought to care for the needy, whether it was on the front lines or back home where they served American Legion Post 2 together, Read said.

It had taken years for that statue to be completed, first approved by



SONNY TAPIA, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Diane Carlson Evans, left, laughs as her husband, Michael, holds her medals June 19, 2025, at the Montana Military Museum at Fort Harrison after she said jokingly, “These are heavy.”

Congress in 1988 and completed in 1993, but it was far from the end of Carlson Evans’ advocacy, Read said. She’d take on veteran homelessness and healthcare, and she seemed tireless and focused through it all, he noticed.

“Her voice is strong,” Read said.

Diane Carlson Evans, an Army nurse and lifelong veteran advocate,

died May 20 at 79 years old after battling cancer.

Carlson Evans began her service in the Army in 1968, tending to the wounded at the 71st Evacuation Hospital in Pleiku, Vietnam, and the 36th Evacuation Hospital’s burn unit in Vung Tau. Women

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US SENATE RACE

Bodnar campaign submits 30K signatures

Independent candidate needed 13,000 to get on ballot, leads fundraising

CARLY GRAF
carly.graf@missoulain.com

While Republicans and Democrats vying for Montana’s open U.S. Senate seat are one week out from their primaries, Seth Bodnar, who left the top post at University of Montana to run for the office as an independent, says his campaign has gathered more than twice the signatures needed for his unconventional candidacy.

The Bodnar campaign announced Tuesday it had collected nearly 30,000 signatures from Montanans. The campaign needs more than 13,000 signatures to be approved by the Montana Secretary of State to get onto the November ballot without a party label. Tuesday was the deadline to submit signatures to county election administrators.



Bodnar



“While DC Insiders tried to rig this election in March by installing a handpicked candidate who will do their bidding, our campaign has spent months building a political movement of Montanans who want the chance to send leaders to Washington who will always put Montana First,” Bodnar said in a statement. “I will never pay allegiance to Party bosses or political elites, and I will work every day until Election Day to earn the vote of every Montanan.”

State law allows independent candidates to avoid the primary gauntlet and instead demonstrate buy-in from voters by collecting a certain number of signatures, a threshold that varies depending on the office sought.

The campaign first submits the petitions to county election officers, who approve or reject signatures from local residents before passing the batch of approved signatures to the secretary of state for another round of verification. Only after Montana’s top election administrator has signed off on the total does an independent candidate get on the ballot.

By Tuesday afternoon, county election officials throughout the state had approved 11,000 signatures and rejected 3,984 of those that had been submitted, according to information provided by the secretary of state’s office. County administrators have until June 1 to evaluate and submit signatures to the secretary of state for certification.

Bodnar’s campaign said it submitted signatures from residents in 52 of Montana’s 56 counties.

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Congress considers cattle for wildfire suppression

New federal grazing policy proposals would open up millions of acres to grazing

ROBERT CHANEY
Montana Free Press

More than 1,000 cows and sheep died when the 2024 Remington fire scorched almost 200,000 acres in south-central Montana. If proposed federal grazing policies become law, those livestock could be considered firefighters instead of fire victims.

Under federal proposals floated by both Congress and cabinet agencies this spring, livestock could become major players in wildfire suppression efforts by literally eating the fuel before it burns. However, current research indicates the results could vary widely depending on what landscape and climate are involved. And critics say the revised policies would

spread invasive species, hurt endangered ones and do nothing to stop wildfires.

Both Republicans and Democrats have pitched grazing-as-firefighting bills in the current congressional cycle, and the Trump administration has released new agency grazing policies listing fire suppression as a justification. But the debate rarely gets at a central question: Are firefighters asking for ranchers’ help to reduce grass fires, or are ranchers asking for more grass by claiming that grazing could be a wildfire suppression tool? At stake are millions of acres of public grassland and forest that currently have little or no livestock accessibility.

“From a livestock producer standpoint, we’ve been having these conversations for many years about bringing cattle grazing into the toolbox for fire mitigation and management,” said Raylee Honeycutt, executive vice president of the Montana



THOM BRIDGE, INDEPENDENT RECORD

Cowboys move cattle near Deadman Coulee in Lewis and Clark County on Sept. 5, 2023.

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