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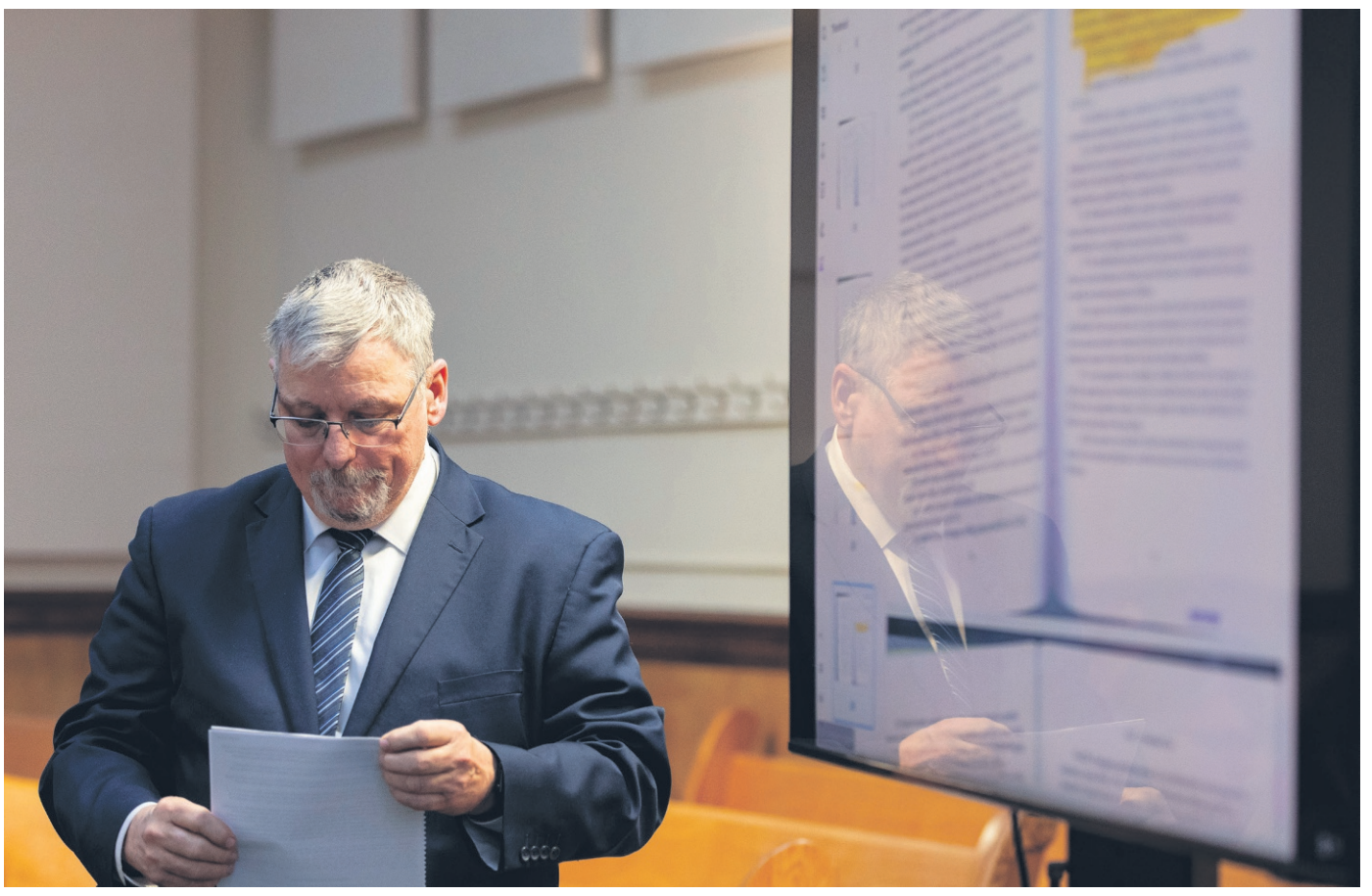
CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

‘THEY LOST THEIR COMMON SENSE’



MEGAN NIELSEN, MONTANA STANDARD

Plaintiff’s attorney Lawrence Henke during a trial at Butte-Silver Bow Courthouse in Butte on Jan. 16.

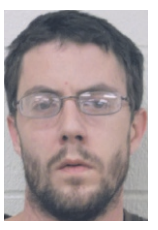
Laywer in $5.5M case says agency’s ‘systemic ignorance’ fails MT children

MIKE SMITH
mike.smith@mtstandard.com

Throughout a two-week civil trial in Butte, an attorney cast Montana’s child protection agency as so buried in its own bureaucracy, it failed for six months to do the simplest thing: call the cops about a child rape.

Because of that, Lawrence Henke said, a 12-year-old girl the agency knew was pregnant, and later knew had given birth, continued to be raped by her mother’s live-in boyfriend — the man who got her pregnant in the first place.

In Montana, no one under the age of 16 can consent to sex, so a pregnancy at age 12 means a crime has been committed, Henke said.



Spencer

The state’s Child and Family Services Division was mandated by Montana law and its own policies to report to law enforcement any indications of a sexual offense involving a child, he argued, but reports from multiple callers bounced around the agency for 185 days in 2014

Please see NEGLIGENCE, Page A7

IMMIGRATION

Gianforte, AG probe Helena resolution

CHRISTINE COMPTON
christine.compton@helenair.com

Just two weeks after the Helena City Commission declared in a resolution it wanted to keep local police out of participating in immigration enforcement, Montana Attorney General Austin Knudsen announced Wednesday he had opened an investigation into whether the measure violates a law banning sanctuary cities signed by the governor in 2021.

“I’d suggest the city of Helena concentrate on enabling their law enforcement, maybe fixing some potholes instead of trying to play national politics,” Knudsen said.

In a press conference at the Montana State Capitol, Knudsen and Gov. Greg Gianforte, both Republicans, warned Helena and any Montana city that if they are found to be in violation of law passed through House Bill 200 five years ago that they could face large fines

Please see IMMIGRATION, Page A2

Senior ‘RINO hunter’ files for return to Legislature

SEABORN LARSON
seaborn.larson@lee.net

GREAT FALLS — Montana Public Service Commissioner Randy Pinocci, a pugnacious Republican from Sun River, has filed to return to the Montana Legislature.

Pinocci’s last eight years on the PSC have been marked by infighting, investigations and the occasional mutiny. In other words, Pinocci is no stranger to confrontation, and the race he’s filed for in Senate District 12 is bound for conflict.

To understand his approach to this election, it’s important to quickly learn that RINO stands for “Republican In Name Only.”

“I’m the senior RINO hunter,”

Please see PINOCCI, Page A2

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