



## **Statement from Gallatin County Attorney Audrey Cromwell**

*For questions involving the death of Catherine Sorensen in Park County, please contact the Park County Sheriff, Park County Attorney's Office, or the Attorney General's Office.*

July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Regarding the Wardle strangulation and tampering with evidence case pending before the Gallatin County District Court: I understand it is incredibly difficult to hear, but as this prosecution remains pending, Montana law and the prosecutors' Rules of Professional Conduct prohibit me from publicly discussing certain facts or evidence involved. These strict rules exist to protect the integrity of due process, the rights of everyone involved, including victims, and the justice system as a whole – the Attorney General understands that.

What I can discuss publicly is the critical work my office does every day to prosecute intimate partner violence and protect victims in Gallatin County, and ask the public for their continued trust as this case proceeds.

For myself, my team of prosecutors and victim advocates, and anyone who has been affected personally by its scourge, domestic violence is not an abstract policy issue.

Addressing the public health crises of domestic violence and femicide is one of my highest priorities. When I took office, I discovered over 600 unprosecuted cases – hundreds of them involving sexual assault. Over six months I met with victims personally and my team and I resolved each of those cases, when possible and appropriate. Now even the most complex cases brought to my office are addressed in a timely manner – not ignored and put away in boxes.

Medical research shows that non-fatal strangulation is one of the strongest predictors that domestic violence will escalate. Prosecuting strangulation cases begins with a first responder asking targeted questions during the 911 call, continues with appropriate medical evaluation, trauma-informed interviews, and thorough law enforcement investigation and evidence collection that accurately reflects the danger posed to the victim. In the courtroom, my office has enlisted the expertise of a physician from Bozeman Health who serves as an expert witness to every strangulation case we prosecute.

My office partners with HAVEN and law enforcement to establish county-wide protocols. In 2023 we implemented the APRAIS model, a life-saving protocol that helps first responders identify victims of domestic violence at greatest risk of being injured or killed, allowing for intervention and support.

**Gallatin County Attorney**  
Audrey Cromwell, County Attorney



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Now we are actively working on a county-wide Strangulation Response Protocol.

Protecting victims is not about politics. It is about building the strongest possible cases through the strongest possible law enforcement investigations. Communities across the country have demonstrated that [coordinated strangulation protocols](#) save lives and strengthen criminal prosecutions.

I call on all County law enforcement agencies; including the Bozeman Police Department, Gallatin County Sheriff's Office, Belgrade Police Department, Montana State University Police Department, and every other law enforcement agency serving Gallatin County – to join us in this effort.

As one of the few women serving as a county attorney in Montana, my job is to protect survivors whose lives have been upended by dangerous abuse, coercive control, and violence behind closed doors. This responsibility fortifies my belief that we must continue improving our response – not only in the courtroom – but from the first moment a victim calls 911.

Every survivor deserves a justice system that takes these often-misunderstood cases seriously. Every law enforcement officer deserves the training and tools necessary to build the strongest possible investigation. Every prosecutor deserves the evidence necessary to seek justice. And every member of our community deserves confidence that decisions are made based on the law, the evidence, and the ethical obligations that govern prosecutors.

That work is more challenging than issuing press statements. It requires collaboration, evidence-based best practices, and a shared commitment to protecting victims.

My office will fight to do that work every day.