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Book Review: A Guide to the State Constitution

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By Judy Meadows
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Book Review: A guide to the state constitution

Larry M. Elison & Fritz Snyder, *The Montana State Constitution: A Reference Guide* (Greenwood Press 2001).

By Stacey L. Gordon, reference librarian
Jameson Law Library, UM School of Law

Few state documents command more reverence than a state's constitution. A constitution expresses how the people wish to organize their government and their relationship to their government. A constitution attests to the character

of the state. It is the organic and fundamental law of the state. People will fight to defend their rights under their constitution and fiercely champion what they believe it stands for, but few actually study the document, its origins and what it means now.

In 1972, Montanans had the opportunity to re-define the state of Montana in a new constitution. The process of drafting and adopting a new constitution – from the election of Constitutional Convention delegates to the final ratification – spurred unparalleled discussion and debate

round the state.

In 2002, the 30th Anniversary of the 1972 Constitution provided Montanans a chance to reflect on how the 1972 Constitution defines Montana thirty years later. The discussion involved fewer people than it did 30 years ago, but the issues were no less significant.

As Montana changes, the discussion must continue, and Larry Ellison and Fritz Snyder's book, "The Montana State Constitution: A Reference Guide," can establish the necessary statewide interest in, and knowledge of our constitution.

Ellison and Snyder write about both the history of the 1972 Montana Constitution, and how we, our legislature, and our courts have amended and interpreted our constitution over the last 30 years. These intertwined discussions provide insight into how the Convention delegates and the citizens of Montana intended in 1972 to define our government and how we define it now.

Ellison and Snyder's text leaves the strong impression that the 1972 Montana Constitution is a unique and powerful document. ○

UM Law School CLE set for 3 Montana locations

The University of Montana School of Law will sponsor three continuing legal education conferences at no cost to Montana attorneys.

Professor Greg Munro will present "Current Law for Negotiating and Settling Automobile Insurance Claims" and Professor Bill Corbett will present "Checklist for the Analysis of an Employment Law Case."

Both of these topics will be presented at the following:

- Tuesday, January 21, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the First State Bank of Malta Community Room
- Wednesday, January 22, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls
- Thursday, January 23 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Holiday Inn in Bozeman

There is no need to preregister for these conferences. Each CLE is approved for 3 hours of CLE credit.

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