Letter To The Editor: Crimes motivated by bias are more damaging



This letter to the editor was posted in the Gillette News Record on November 25th, 2025. You can read the original letter online **HERE**.

The malicious harms ordinance is more than just a law; it's a clear statement that the city of Gillette is a welcoming and safe place for everyone who lives, works, shops, seeks medical care, attends school, or visits here.

The fundamental goal of the ordinance was to recognize that certain crimes, when motivated by bias against a victim's identity are inherently more damaging to the victim and to the overall fabric of our community. Making a threat, inflicting harm, or damaging property simply because of who someone is an abhorrent act that strikes at the very heart of civil society.

Consider the law already on Wyoming's books regarding "strangulation of a household member." We all agree that any act of strangulation is heinous. However, the law recognizes

that when that violence occurs within a household – a place where trust and care are expected – the betrayal and trauma are significantly amplified for the victim.

Removing that special circumstance and treating it as just “strangulation” would deeply hurt victims of domestic violence and could send a dangerous message that the severity of their abusers’ actions is being dismissed.

The repeal of the ordinance would have the same devastating effect on our community. It would send a clear message that bias-motivated crimes are viewed as no worse than simple crimes. For those who rely on this ordinance for a sense of safety, its repeal would feel like a clear signal that it is now “okay” for others to harm them or their property based on prejudice.

Repealing this ordinance would be seen by those who would commit these acts as a green light to proceed with malicious intent.

I urge the mayor and City Council to keep the malicious harms ordinance on the books and continue to affirm that Gillette stands against hate and values the safety and dignity of everyone in our community.

Heidi Kennedy

Gillette