Doug Smith

(past) Assistant Secretary Dept of Homeland Security

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The Vail Daily's recent article, "Gypsum weighs alternatives to sheriff's contract amid staffing concerns ...", should concern every family in this valley. Staffing shortfalls and attrition have real consequences. One of the most serious is the failure to properly support our school resource officer (SRO) program.

I don't come to this issue lightly. I've spent three decades in national security, including serving as assistant secretary for the Department of Homeland Security, where I had the privilege to work hand in hand with state and local law enforcement across the entire country. That experience taught me that safety depends on prevention: trusted relationships, early warning and people who KNOW their community. In our schools, that is exactly what a well-supported SRO provides. An SRO knows the students, earns their trust and is there BEFORE a crisis, not after.

I've also seen what it looks like when it's done right. I worked closely with the Vail Police Department as it expanded and strengthened its SRO program, and I saw Rebecca Anderson's commitment to it firsthand. She understands that an SRO is not a line item to cut when staffing runs thin. It is a promise to our kids, their parents and our teachers.

Rebecca is a decorated Vail Police sergeant who has earned the respect of her colleagues and this community. She is committed to fully supporting the SRO program and to rebuilding the staffing that makes it possible. That is the leadership the Eagle County Sheriff's Office needs, and the leadership towns like Gypsum and the whole Vail Valley deserve for their money.

Our children's safety should never be a casualty of a staffing crisis. Please join me in voting for Rebecca Anderson for Eagle County sheriff on Nov. 3.