

POINTS OF VIEW

# Campaign restores people's voice to government

**T**his past presidential campaign certainly had its share of memorable aspects. Perhaps the most significant of which was the emergence of an independent candidate with the clout to get the attention of the political establishment on both the Democratic and Republican sides. Never before has a renegade third-party candidate made the major parties dance and shake like the little guy with the big money, big ears and big ideas.

Ross Perot spoke in down-home analogies and offered quaint, albeit overly simplistic, solutions to America's problems. He did not gain either of the registered votes in our house despite his promise to talk turkey, get under the hood, fish or cut bait, talk the bull by the horns and dance naked at the big party, if that's what it's gonna take. That kind of blue collar, nitty-gritty buzztalk just didn't really fit

with the \$3 billion bankrupt.

Nevertheless, Perot spoke the absolute truth with clarity on one major issue: If the people of America want their country back, they've got to take it back.

If Perot does nothing else in his political life beyond getting that simple message out to the masses, he still has done more good than most politicians will do in a lifetime. That basic concept of government of, by and for the people had all but perished from neglect. The political machine was fueled by corruptions and self-interest, and an apathetic population was doing nothing more to stop it than crying in their beer.

Most people think the single vote doesn't count and the single voice isn't heard. They believe the governing process is the exclusive province of special-interest groups. If this is indeed



**GARY BELANGER**

true, then it is because the people of this country have let it be true. An apathetic public has solidly proven the adage: "Nobody can take advantage of you without your permission."

The time to take our country back has come and there is strong evidence of it happening right here in our own community. An incredible grass-roots network has begun petitioning for a

proposal to provide property tax relief and school finance reform. The Olmstead/Kearney network is made up of people from all walks of life and economic backgrounds who share an interest in the future of our state and the future of our children. Most importantly they share a commitment to availing themselves of the democratic process to have their collective voice heard and will done.

The primary element to this remarkable restoration of the vox populi, which would make Perot very proud, is the organization of grass-roots volunteers who are giving time, talent and energy to a cause they believe in. These people are not sitting back, waiting for our elected officials to send these vital issues to political purgatory. They are moving forward in ever-increasing numbers to gain support for their cause.

The demographics of this movement obliterate all boundaries of geography, economy, age, race and political party affiliation. Its unity comes from its diversity. It is the essence of the democratic ideal of the greatest good for the greatest number.

Whether you see this as just another petition drive or as a reclamation of our fundamental rights, you can be sure Perot was right on the mark when he said we had to stand up and speak out. Sometimes the "little guy" does have something important to say.

*Gary Belanger, a Redford Township resident, is a school board trustee and works as a real estate salesman. To leave a message for him from a touch-tone phone, dial 953-2047 mailbox 1890.*

# Parents will balk over MEAP test design in '97

**Q**UESTION: When I reviewed our MEAP test scores this year, I concluded our school district is going backward.

For years our math and reading scores were in the 89 to 94 percent range on the MEAP test. Now our MEAP math and reading scores are in the 30 and 40 percent range. Some of the poorer school districts in Michigan have scores of 15 and 20 percent on the MEAP. One poor district had a score of 10 percent in math. My neighbor is desperate. Her son, a "C-plus" student, did not pass the MEAP and may not get a state endorsed diploma. How can a C-plus student not pass a basic skills test? Is it true that failure to pass the test after '97 means a student won't even get a diploma?

**ANSWER:** The easy out, for me, is to tell you the new MEAP is different than the old MEAP basic skills test. It is no longer a test of basic skills but an essential skills test that measures students' higher level thinking and problem solving skills.

At this point I should drop the subject, because if I attack the test, it will sound like the same old teacher/educational

remedial, slow learner classes.

It is common knowledge that the once nationally respected Department of Research and Evaluation and Testing in the Department of Education has been dismantled. What was left are curriculum people (as I was) who dream of the ideal.

**Item difficulty**

Someone in Lansing should help those in charge of the MEAP grasp the basic test construction concept of Item Difficulty. That is, if 70 percent of a normal student population misses a specific question, the question is suspect — and needs to be studied and revised.

Has any predictive validity been made? I heard it, so I'll make my prediction.

**Prediction:** If MEAP scores don't go up, watch for a major change of heart among our legislators who supported the test as a vehicle to mandate a state curriculum.

*Picture Representative Jones in a quality, college-bound student school district in Oakland or Wayne County. It is going into 1997 when those students who don't pass the MEAP don't get a diploma. Say that only 50 percent of the student population in one of his quality districts passes the MEAP, meaning 50 percent don't get a diploma.*

Parents will tear their legislator's eyeballs out and it's a feeding frenzy for lawyers.

The new MEAP was developed with all the right intentions. Many school districts are setting up highly intensified afterschool experiences for those who haven't mastered the MEAP, instead of just moving them on through the system. Japan has done this for years in its after-school, Juku classes.

But 60 to 70 percent of a quality high school population not receiving some type of a diploma in 1997 is insanity.

*James "Doc" Doyle, a former teacher/school administrator/university instructor, is president of Doyle and Associates, an educational consulting firm. To leave a message for Doyle from a touch-tone phone, dial 953-2047, mailbox number 1895.*



**DOC DOYLE**

The new MEAP is a product of the Leadership in The National Council of Teachers of Math, the National Reading Association (and their state affiliates), college professors and some Michigan teachers. These are professionals who made a tremendous leap of faith that says all kids in a country that advocates a mandatory education system will be higher level thinkers. It's not going to happen.

Sometimes I think these leaders have been in the ivory tower too long, or have been teaching advanced math classes at the high school level too long to remember who shows up for the

remedial, slow learner classes.

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## LETTERS

**Who opened door?**

**K**, who the hell left the closet door open?  
Anthony Brechler, Livonia

**Clinton forgets God**

**M**r. Clinton's Message to Congress and the Nation was all inclusive on economic and social issues. We wish him well and support his sincere effort. In a letter to

him I suggested the one issue he left out is — God in our lives.

From the beginning of this nation we declared freedom "... with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence . . ." and in 1954 by an act of Congress "under God" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Mr. Clinton's oversight is sad. Our community and the nation has an inspiration from the nation's founders for each of us to have a faith,

worship together and in private, to love God and accept God's love and love our neighbor.

Paul Kuebler, Birmingham

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