

# Opinion

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9A(F)

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## oral quarrel

# School prayer issue responses

This week's Oral Quarrel asked Farmington and Farmington Hills residents their stand on an amendment which would allow prayer in public schools.

Here are the replies:

Definitely in favor.

I don't think it should be allowed, and it wouldn't work anyway.

I believe they should have oral prayer in the school. Not made by the state or the school, but they should have an opportunity to have prayer in the schools.

No, no — a thousand times no. Just who is going to make up these prayers, who is going to decide what they are going to be? It will be divisive, a step backwards, a terrible thing.

I think public prayer should be allowed in the schools. However, I don't think it should be mandated on a day-by-day basis. But I don't think any child or person who wants to have prayer should feel scorned at if they want to do it.

I would like to see prayer back in the public school, but I would like to see them use every prayer of

every denomination and let people learn to live with each other and learn what other religious prayers are and learn to tolerate since this is a country of several different races, different denominations of people.

I am all for it. It is a necessary thing, especially in the United States today. Our money says in God We Trust. Why shouldn't we be able to pray in the schools? The kids need this. They need to know that God is with us.

I am afraid starting prayer in schools is just going to start a lot of controversy and a lot of problems. If people want their children to pray in school, they can send them to religious schools. The public school should keep a strict separation of church and state.

I am strongly opposed to any prayer in public schools be it silent or otherwise.

I am opposed to the amendment because it is a false issue. Private prayer is currently allowed in the schools according to the Supreme Court ruling. It is a tool whereby political people are seeking to gain votes on issues that is emotional and not understood by the majority of people.

Many people have tried for a long time to enforce separation of church and state and get prayers out of the schools. It is an unfortunate political trend these days to try to overturn majority decisions such as no prayer in school and legalize abortion. Very unfortunate.

Although I am a Christian, I do not feel an amendment is necessary to allow school prayer. Prayer need not be legislated. One can pray anytime, anywhere silently, privately. Many fundamentalists seem to want to "show their beliefs" instead of living them.

I think the government should go beyond just allowing prayer in schools. I think the government should make every student in the school pray to Jesus because he is our Lord and He can save us.

I think it should be allowed, and I cannot even believe there is a discussion on whether or not you can pray. What happened to our Constitution to begin with?

It can't hurt and it could do a lot of good.

I believe the amendment should

be put through. If it is good enough for the Congress to open with a prayer, there is no reason why the schools shouldn't.

I oppose the amendment. Home and church are the proper setting for teaching prayer. Once children get the habit of prayer, it should become a private communication with God which they will practice freely anywhere and at anytime.

I am in favor of prayer in the public schools. Very much in favor.

There is no need for an amendment. There has always been prayer when I was in school. I used to pray that the teacher wouldn't call on me and if she wouldn't I used to thank the Lord.

I think it is a demagogic issue and it has no merit at all. And it would just simply ruin the Constitution for no good reason. There is nothing good to come of it. I oppose the idea.

I am in favor of prayer in school, and feel prayer can be made anywhere besides the church.

# Sunshine law is under attack

WE IN the newsgathering business are taking a hard line against any tampering with the state's Open Meetings Act. You as voters and taxpayers should take the same hard line.

The more the Open Meetings Act is "amended," the less you can find out about what government is doing with your hard-earned tax money.

Almost as soon as the act — known as the Sunshine law — was enacted in 1976, local government officials tried to poke holes in it — seeking attorney's opinions with tortured reasoning, forcing the public to take them to court, seeking amendments in the Michigan Legislature.

So far the public's right to know has been upheld by the Court of Appeals and Gov. William G. Milliken's 1981 veto of two crippling amendments. But local officials who want to protect themselves with the cloak of secrecy just won't quit. They are back in Lansing seeking more "amendments" to the law.

The House Towns and Counties Committee has a meeting scheduled for 9 a.m. Tuesday on several efforts to add big clouds to what has been termed the "sunshine law."

CHIEF TOPIC will be House Bill 5219, which would allow local elected governing boards to conduct annual performance evaluations of top employees in closed-door sessions.

Chief law is that the bill equates a performance evaluation with a serious charge. For example, if there is a charge the city manager has been hitting the bottle or fondling females on the job, the manager can ask a closed meeting. But if a governing board wants to know what progress is being made on curriculum devel-

opment and affirmative action, the current law says the chief administrator's evaluation must be public.

HB 5219 would allow all evaluations to be behind closed doors — the curriculum questions as well as the boozing charges.

THERE ARE excellent reasons why evaluations of top employees are, and should continue to be, performed in public. Look at it this way:

An elected chief administrator faces the voters — be it the president of the United States, the governor of the state, the Oakland and Wayne County executives, the mayors of many cities. They present and defend their records openly.

But city managers, school superintendents, community college and university presidents are hired by legislative boards. If they succeed in bamboozling the Legislature to pass HB 5219, they will close off public accounting of their stewardships.

Alexander Hamilton, one of America's founding fathers, put it succinctly: "I don't care who passes the laws. I want to be the one who administers them."

His point was that the person who executes the laws has more influence on public services than the lawmakers who adopt a policy statement.

TEXTBOOKS ON how to be a good board member say much the same thing. The most important job a board does is to hire the chief administrator (where there is no elected executive). Following that in importance is the task of an annual evaluation of that administrator.

Rather than seeking legislative clouds over the "sunshine law," local government representatives would be better off learning how to do better performance evaluations.

Whenever elected local governing board members spend too much time behind closed doors, the public gets suspicious. And with excellent reason. The public's business should be done in public, not in secret.



Tim Richard

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