

from our readers

Naked truth about taxes

To the editor:  
The year was 1043 when Lady Godiva rode naked on a horse to protest high taxes. Taxes were always on the rise. Perhaps this is something we should do today.  
Men, women and children should all go naked together for a whole day — even out of doors — to protest high taxes and the way they keep on going up.  
Then we strip, tar, feather and send packing any leader that suggests that taxes go up.  
Send them packing out on rafts. Hang them. Maybe this way our government will get our message on taxes.  
Let's begin with the Farmington Hills government. Get the tar ready. Make it nice and hot. Which leader will go first? Mayor Vagnozzi... you first. Get in!  
Vernon C. Kleplinski, Farmington Hills

Give credit when it's due

To the editor:  
I read with interest the Feb. 7 Observer article, "Kids brush up talents in Odyssey preview." and was pleased to see the newspaper feature the excellent efforts of our Farmington students.  
However, your article contained a significant error regarding the origination of the OM program here in Farmington.  
The Odyssey program (called Olympics of the Mind at the time) was introduced to Farmington students by a parent group nine years ago. That parent group was the Farmington Association for Children with Exceptional Talent (FACET), coordinated by Mr. and Mrs. Al Peterman. They, in fact, initiated the initial inquiry regarding the OM program.  
However, the real work of coordinating and presenting that first competition was done by Rose Marie (Roe) Fertig.  
As a FACET member in 1982, Roe organized, coordinated and presented the first Farmington OM competition.  
Pat Girbach, who went on to coordi-

enate future competitions, was a middle school coach for that first competition. Her team did such an exceptional job that they went on to the state competition.  
Roe spent many long hard hours recruiting and coordinating team coaches, selecting and training competition judges, coordinating activities with school administrators, getting information about OM out to all students, and making sure that every interested youngster had an opportunity to participate.  
Then she arranged for a competition site, recruited a celebrity guest host (Doug Ross), and (after she made sure there were refreshments for everyone), she also hosted that competition at the Farmington Training Center.  
Roe is still very active in the community. Today she is a member of the boards of The Community Center and the Friends of the Library. And, she is a past chairperson (twice) of the Farmington Professional Women's Network.  
Let's acknowledge those who contribute to our community.

Bill Fertig, Northville

Don't cheer the Gulf War

To the editor:  
Thank you for printing the letter of Ariane Victor (Feb. 25 Observer) which eloquently expressed my own views about the Gulf War.  
We have killed 55,000 people and destroyed a nation. We paid for this war with a military machine built at the expense of our national solvency and our own education, health care, and even water, roads, and quality of life.  
I respect the clearly defined views of those (President Bush and U.S. Rep. Broomfield not among them) who say that conflict was necessary to prevent greater evil.  
Like Victor, I feel that the war was a tragically wrong way to deal with the situation.  
Now that it is over, it seems that this is a time for sober reflection and healing, not a time for sport-championship type jubilation and exaltation.  
War is not something to cheer about.  
Mary Power, Farmington

Lawsuits must stop

To the editor:  
We, as a society, are obsessed with winners and losers. We exalt the winners and console the losers. A great deal of attention has been given to the recent \$19 million verdict against Hutzel Hospital in favor of a 8-year-old child with cerebral palsy. This event was addressed eloquently by Susan Hersberg Adelman, MD, president of the Michigan State Medical Society, and by Kristina K. Sawney, MD, president of the Wayne County Medical Society, in recent area newspapers. I heartily support their views.  
Who are the winners and losers in this scenario? The child and his family may not be viewed as winners. Moreover, they may get little more than half of the award after legal fees and court costs are deducted. The plaintiff's attorney is an outstanding winner with one-third of the award. There are few people who could not retire to a life of ease with such a windfall.  
The saddest part of this whole fiasco is that the physician and the hospital did nothing wrong. It is because of their superior skill and modern technology that this tiny infant was kept alive. For this they are being punished. But, so is every man, woman and child who lives in Michigan.

WE HAVE the finest system of medical care in the world. However, it cannot guarantee perfection in its ability to treat illness or deliver babies. Yet, this is the standard to which it is being held in the courts. A child with cerebral palsy deserves financial support, but not from the physician or hospital that saved its life. Rather, other methods, such as no-fault compensation, should be adopted.  
It is time for the losing majority to assert itself. The people alone have the power to influence the Legislature and the courts. The people alone can bring sanity to a legal system that is out of control and is destroying the high quality of medicine to which we all aspire. As Jules Justerand said, "The future is not in the hands of fate, but in ourselves."  
Clayton H. Gordon, MD, President, Oakland County Medical Society

points of view

Reformers push for 'compact' districts



Tim Richard

IT'S NOT NEWS that Michigan's 17th and 18th Congressional Districts are among the most gerrymandered in the United States.  
Gerrymandering is the custom, nearly as old as the Bill of Rights, of misshaping legislative districts to concentrate an opponent's strength in as few districts as possible.  
"Moreover, gerrymanders will only get worse — that is, more effective — as computer software and hardware grows in power and sophistication," say two professors in a paper published by The Heartland Institute, a conservative think tank based in Chicago.

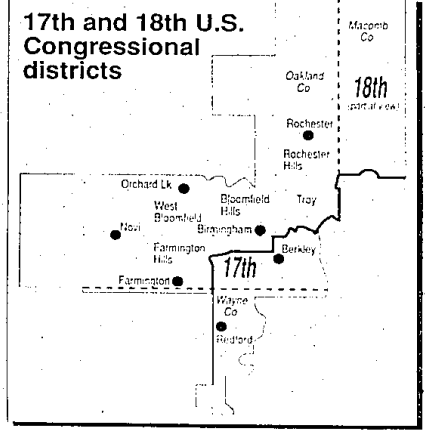
THE 18TH DISTRICT takes in a corner of northwest Macomb County, meanders in an S-shaped curve across Oakland County and ends in the Brighton area of southeastern Livingston County. It was arranged to give 70 percent margins to Republican Bill Broomfield.  
The 17th is shaped like a fly's leg, starting in the middle of the Royal Oak area, turning southwestward through Southfield, dropping south through Bedford Township and northwest Detroit, and ending with a toe in Inkster. It's safe for Democrat Sander Levin.

What's worse is that the Heartland study puts numbers on these machinations.  
We all have known, since the 1964 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, that districts should have nearly equal populations. In Michigan they're also supposed to minimize the number of communities cut apart.  
The Heartland study by Daniel Polsby, a Northwestern University law professor, and Robert Popper, a New York City litigation attorney, proposes a new standard: compactness.

They measure compactness by the ratio of a figure's area to the length of its perimeter. By this standard, the most compact figure in the world is the circle. It is assigned a score of 1.0.  
You figure the area of a congressional district, calculate the perimeter (circumference) of a circle with the same area, measure the district's perimeter, and divide the circle's perimeter by the district's. The score

"I tend to agree with the authors," Cruce said, "but I'm not sure the courts will buy the idea."  
"Courts will deal with those issues that have direct impact on the rights of people. They've looked at the integrity of district boundary lines. I'm not sure the courts would look at it (compactness) the same way as the authors."  
Michigan Democrats have made a big thing of equal populations.  
MICHIGAN is due to lose two of its 18 congressional districts by 1992. The average district will have 590,000 souls.  
Detroit Democrats are adamant that they have two congressional districts in their city of barely 1 million.  
Oakland Republican chair Jim Alexander also wants two self-contained districts for his bailiwick of 1.1 million. Currently, Oakland has portions of five districts.

SEN. DOUG CRUCE, R-Troy, and this writer received early copies of the study. Cruce is an important figure because he chairs the Senate Local Government and Reapportionment Committee, making him the GOP's point man on congressional and legislative redistricting.



**Address an unsettled problem.**  
Imagine if you had to ask for blood to save the life of someone you love. Next time the American Red Cross asks, give blood, please.  
GIVE BLOOD, PLEASE

**Wills & Living Trusts**  
Discussion, Questions & Answers  
Saturday, March 16, 1991  
10:30 A.M.  
Farmington Hills Library  
32737 W. 12 Mile  
Reservations 347-9779

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In celebration of our 67th branch, First of America Bank-Southeast Michigan, N.A. is offering a pre-grand opening, one year Certificate of Deposit paying 7.5%.  
And for a limited time only, you'll also receive a no service charge checking account for one year.  
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