

Farmington Observer

OPINION

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33411 GRAND RIVER, FARMINGTON, MICHIGAN 48335

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 1996

Vote in peace

Last-ditch appeals unwanted

They used to close the taverns on election day. These days we'd settle for closing the mouths of a few politicians and their supporters.

It almost never fails. Election day nears and people start complaining about the intensity of the last-minute politicking, including the never-ending attack ads on TV and pushy people near the polls on election day.

Count us among the complainers this year. Across the airwaves there has been a surfeit of negative campaign advertisements that, repeated ad nauseam, are just about guaranteed to drive even the most civic-minded of us away from politics — and maybe even away from the polls on election day.

It has been said that "negative campaigning" — uttering nasty things about a candidate on behalf of his/her opponent — works, and that's why it continues.

We suppose those attack ads turn the trick with the sort of people who believe the headlines they read in the supermarket tabloids (Gee, did you know that President Clinton was photographed with John F. Kennedy three weeks ago?), but the rest of us get pretty darned fed up with them.

Maybe it's time for an iron rule in the form of a state law: Let's ban all politicking, say, the weekend before a Tuesday election.

Get the insults off TV, and, while we're at it, let's also do away with those annoying supporters near the polls on election day.

Complaints have been phoned into the Observer office during recent Farmington-area elections about people pushing their "vote-for" paper a bit too close to the polls.

You, the voter, went to do your civic chore after a hard day's work, and you end up running the gauntlet outside a school or fire hall.

We know a voter who drives to the polls, even though she lives just down the street. Why? "I don't want to contend with people giving me their stupid fliers," she said.

It was easier on her nerves, she added, to drive past the gaggle of humanity, waiting like grim panhandlers with their campaign signs and pamphlets.

Someone is bound to ask: So what's the big deal? Isn't that the American way, to listen to opinions on politics?

Well, sure, but our friend, along with the rest of the body politic, had been absorbing opinions on these races and ballot proposals for weeks and weeks.

There comes a time to cease the tumult and shouting. Give us a break, folks and friends of folks. The voters have looked and listened for a long time now.

Give them a chance to vote in peace.

Roads: Never-ending concern

Oakland County's roads range from superhighways to tree-lined boulevards to country lanes. No matter where you drive around our 900-square-mile county, you'll find a maze of conditions, from gridlocked arteries to fast-flowing interstates to flooded back roads.

The last survey conducted by the Beverly Hills-based Road Commission for Oakland County identified a staggering \$1.5 billion in necessary road improvements by the year 2005. "Unfortunately," says road commission chief Brent Bair, "you could cut this total amount in half, or even by two-thirds, but there still would not be enough funding to bring about the remaining improvements."

The independently run road commission has an \$80 million budget, 550 employees and a three-member board appointed by the elected county board of commissioners. The state funds the road commission via license-plate fees and the fuel tax (15 cents per gallon since 1984, 45th among the 50 states). Oakland's booming economy doesn't directly increase commission funding. More fuel-efficient cars mean less state funding for road repairs.

Like other urban counties, Oakland is a donor county in terms of transportation dollars. Donor counties subsidize rural counties that don't have the population or tax base to generate sufficient road funding.

The Road Commission for Oakland County oversees 2,500 miles in county roads, including 850 miles of gravel roads. This network is the largest among Michigan's 83 counties and second in size only to the state highway system. The commission also maintains 90 percent of the traffic signals in the county. By contract, it routinely maintains 310 miles of state highway.

At the invitation of newly elected state Sen. Bill Bullard, R-Highland, Bair recently "hit the road" to explain what his commission does and what its limits are in addressing public outcry over the plight of Oakland roads. President of the County Road Association of Michigan, Bair answered commonly asked questions such as:

Q: "What does it cost to improve roads in Oakland County?"

A: "It is sometimes more expensive to do

OAKLAND WATCH



BOB SKLAR

the work in Oakland County than other counties since Oakland has a lot of lakes and wetlands and the soils in many areas are very bad. With all of the growth and development, the cost of land has gone up rapidly, and thus, the cost of purchasing road right-of-way for road projects has increased also. Example costs of road improvements: apply new gravel to gravel road, \$11,000 per mile; build a passing lane, \$40,000; pave gravel subdivision streets, \$170,000 per mile; reconstruct/resurface two-lane asphalt road, adding selected passing and turn lanes, \$300,000 per mile; widen from two lanes to five lanes, \$3.3 million per mile.

Q: "What can be done with a nickel fuel-tax increase?"

A: "A nickel increase would generate an additional \$8.5 million for county road needs in Oakland County. The road commission could reconstruct and resurface 28 miles of two-lane asphalt roads, or widen 2.5 miles of two-lane roads to five lanes, or pave 10.5 miles of gravel roads, assuming half of them have some soil problems. Today, over 200 miles need to be resurfaced, over 100 miles need to be widened due to current traffic volumes and congestion problems and over 100 miles of gravel roads need to be paved due to the traffic volumes using them."

If you know of a road problem where safety is compromised, call the Road Commission for Oakland County's Department of Citizen Services, which will quickly contact the right government agencies: (810) 858-4804.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

Do you remember the first time you voted?



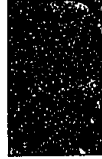
I turned 18 on Nov. 6 and voted on the 7th for Tricky Dick (Nixon).
Sonia D'Arcy
Farmington Hills



That was back in 1964. Kennedy had been killed the year before, and Johnson ran.
Denise McCarty
Howell



In 1952, I was 6 years old and remember making a campaign poster for Eisenhower.
Jill Margolick
Farmington Hills



I know it was when I was 18. It was small issues like roads.
Stacey Sanders
Rochester Hills

We asked this question at Longacre Elementary and First Impressions preschool.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Questions endorsement

Your timing could not have been better. Your endorsement of Steve Dibert on Halloween was very well-timed.

First, it is scary that after viewing the candidate's debates, that your choice is Mr. Dibert. Again, I ask, did we view the same debate? Second, for Dibert to be considered a fiscal moderate is a masquerade in its truest sense.

Did you watch, or better yet, listen to the answers of the questions asked during the debate? Andrew Raczkowski has the grasp of the issues and has specific answers to these concerns that will face our community.

In your endorsement article, it looked like the quotes were taken directly from Andrew's mailer and from his responses in the debate. Andrew Raczkowski has the endorsements of the Farmington Hills Police, the Michigan State Police, Central Michigan University, the Oakland Sheriff, the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, The Detroit News, and the list goes on.

Dibert draws his support from Wayne County, Cleo, and Madison Heights. Does this say anything about Andrew's integrity and ability to effectively represent our community?

I'm just glad the voters based their decision on who is best qualified, not your endorsement.

Bill Smith,
Farmington Hills

Whole language hooey

Seven years ago, a new K-8 language arts curriculum was approved. Consequently, whole language invaded our elementary curriculum with its inventive spelling, word guessing, and developmental learning.

In 1989, not one school in the entire English speaking world had improved reading, writing, or spelling achievement by using whole language ideology or methodology. In 1996, this is still true.

Whole language has cost us much more than new books and teacher training. Salaries and benefits for 13 additional remedial reading specialist are another expenditure.

Reading Recovery personnel had to be trained and hired because too many children didn't learn to read with whole language.

Financial statements don't reflect the thousands of dollars shelled out by Farmington parents for tutors, workbooks, and after-school academic programs such as Phonics First and Sylvan Learning Centers.

The balance sheet doesn't count the cost of demoralized children who haven't learned basic academic skills, despite faithfully attending school. Schools blame the parents and the students for academic failure, while ignoring solid evidence that their educational

programs and theories are primarily at fault. Will history repeat itself? A district committee, comprised of an administrator and 25 teachers volunteering their time, has been working on a "new" language arts curriculum for almost a year.

Does the group consist of the same people who impetuously embraced whole language? This time, can teachers who know that systematic phonics works best speak freely against the status quo without recrimination? Is this committee open to seriously looking at programs that are proven to work based on longitudinal studies? Or do only those who spew the disproved dogmas of child-centered, developmentally appropriate, integrated and hands-on learning, get to be heard?

If critical thinking skills are used by this committee, they will have to choose a knowledge-based curriculum, taught directly, with specific skills and knowledge itemized for each grade level. Accountability will be established for all stakeholders, and the money well-spent.

It's time to be pragmatic about how and what our children learn. Romantic educational notions that don't translate into solid academic achievement, must be condemned.

Patricia A. Alapach,
Farmington Hills

Hills cops stay busy

On behalf of my neighbors on Copper Creek Lane, I would like to thank the Farmington Hills Police Department for their recent early-morning monitoring of traffic on our street. Within a span of 1 1/2 hours the officer was constantly issuing speeding tickets.

Due to the extremely heavy traffic on Hagerty Road, north of 12 Mile, motorists have found a speedy shortcut through our small neighborhood. Many of these drivers live in adjoining subdivisions.

They have every right to use our street. They do not, however, have the right to exceed the 25 mile per hour speed limit. The lack of sidewalks necessitates using the street to get to school bus stops.

Our middle and high school students walk in darkness as cars whiz by at speeds up to 40 miles per hour. Fortunately, our little ones make their way to bus stops in daylight.

To the Farmington Hills Police Department, we say: Come back any time. If you thought the morning hours were filled with speeding cars, we encourage you to come by between 5-6:30 p.m. You'll be just as busy.

Anna Harrison,
Farmington Hills

MEMORY LANE

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

■ 40 YEARS AGO — NOV. 1, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)

Tragedy was miraculously averted Saturday, Oct. 27, 1956, when the canopy of a streaking military jet fighter airplane suddenly broke loose, scattering pieces of metal and plastic over Farmington's business district. There were no injuries. The main portion of the canopy smashed into a car owned by William DeScott, 33425 Halsted Road, that was parked behind Dr. M.L. Hutton's office, 33425 Grand River. The pilot, 27-

year-old Lt. Keith Bordin of Dearborn, managed to land the F-89 jet safely at Wayne County Airport. The plane was traveling at 500 miles per hour at when the canopy came off.

■ 25 YEARS AGO — OCT. 30-31, 1971 (ENTERPRISE & OBSERVER)

Star Cutter, for 20 years a machine shop on Grand River in Farmington Township, announced its closing with the loss of about 100 jobs.

Marik Fedraw finished third with a time of 13:44 to help Farmington beat Lvonla Stevenson, 37-42, in high school cross country action.

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power