

POINTS OF VIEW

LETTERS

Vote to help keep 3 Rs

Now that the sad results of the election are over — education goes on. I hope and pray we have learned how much one vote means. The poor showing of the voters' interest even to vote has proven my point.

Education is failing in so many ways. One is the percentage of people that have failing grades in civics, not computers or sex or sports — that comes natural.

I'm not a prude, I did manage teams in little league baseball and had a very good record. I'm proud of the boys that I managed. They learned something important, dedication, responsibility and team play. The team parents even surprised me with an award. A complete surprise to me and I cherish it dearly, thanks.

The 4th of July is over and as a vet of WWII and Korea, I love my country and God willing most of the people in my country. The 4th of July also means celebration of freedoms earned in so many ways. Not everyone lives this freedom — because they don't vote!

Morally and spiritually the educators have failed me when only 12 percent or less people vote. This means 5 percent of the voters control and run the system. The devil gets into the controllers, not because they don't go to church but they know the system has failed to educate the masses and they can be led by the nose.

Because they don't care where your tax dollars are spent. Freedom means to be responsible — constructive, dedicated and helpful to all as leaders.

In the Washington Post World News (no bloodshed) in Mongolia, a GOP style Revolutionary Movement took place for freedom, of all things! On June 30, 1996 communism lost out after 75 years of control, to a young democratic government representing 2.5 million people. They came to vote (for freedom) in their finest traditional clothing and traveled by horse — camel — and on foot. The electorate, 91 percent Mongolians turned out to vote. Can you imagine — 91 percent. This is freedom!

The victory of democracy in Mongolia demonstrates the value of life, liberty, freedom of speech, request for human rights and justice is not just an American value.

I say again, the Farmington Board of Education has failed us before and continues to do so. Our young people are going to follow the easy way road like their parents that failed to vote!

Learning requires responsible, dedicated teachers. The system is backing this. Our children are learning from the T.V. more than from the schools. What they are learning is not what they must know to graduate. Maybe so, in the social promotional system. Computers, build-

ings and sex education are not a requirement to higher learning from high school.

Computers are available to anyone in the library and institutions of higher learning where they should be. Schools (K-12) are a traditional institution. Let's keep them honorable and respected for what they stand for — the three R's. Not sex because our teachers failed to put across the valuable requirements of learning. Not high priced toys to encourage playing to learning.

Frustration is where our leaders are because people paying hard earned money are demanding that the frivolous attitude of more spending will encourage the idea that learning requires more money not work.

It's time to turn the other cheek. If you don't want that, maybe, I'm your wake up call at whatever hotel you are at. It's hard to correct mistakes, but try it — It's never too late. Vote!

God loves you all regardless. Even the veterans should try and vote; after all, you fought for this right to vote. Some of you able bodied people marched in the parade, so why not march over and vote, even if it's absentee. I do.

George Stretczuk
Farmington

Kevorkian ruling is wrong

The United States Supreme Court is absolutely wrong in ruling that "there is no constitutional right to the cause championed by Dr. Jack Kevorkian" ("Suicide argument heats up following high court ruling," June 29).

The Supreme Court has effectively stated that one's life is not one's own, an assertion which is clearly utter nonsense. The ruling is null and void because it is based upon such a patently false premise.

(Former Oakland County Prosecutor) Richard Thompson's fear that "Unless lawmakers take action, we will have individual doctors deciding whose life is worth living" is unfounded and absurd. His claim conjures images of rogue doctors appearing at random doorsteps to perform unsolicited assisted suicides whether or not their service is requested. In my experience, only those who claim to act on behalf of a government are capable of such arrogance and butchery.

Neither doctors nor anyone else may decide if another's life is worth living. Only the owner of that life may decide if it's worth living, a decision the Supreme Court has just stated is not one that anyone is permitted to make.

Matt Loiselle
Southfield

Modest tax cuts to benefit all age groups



SPENCER ABRAHAM

Finally, a tax cut for Michigan America's hard working, taxpaying families are long overdue for a tax cut. They thought they were voting for a tax cut in 1992, when President Bill Clinton was elected in part by promising one.

Unfortunately, after he became president in 1993, Clinton transformed that promise into the biggest tax hike in American history.

It has been 16 years and four tax increases since Americans last received relief.

Federal taxes now consume 21 percent of national income, more than at any time in the past 200 years.

But now, after several tries and one veto from Clinton, Congress is giving hard-working Americans real tax relief. "The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997" gives Michiganders more than \$3 billion in tax cuts.

The vast bulk of that relief will come in the form of child tax credits for working families. But there is more. The package will help Michigan taxpayers through every stage of their lives.

Children will benefit from a \$500 a child tax credit that will increase their parents' ability to care for them and plan for their futures.

Teens and young adults will receive education tax breaks to help finance their education.

Michiganians who have finished their schooling will be helped by pro-growth tax cuts, including a capital gains tax cut that will stimulate economic expansion and provide more good jobs at good wages.

Americans working to start small businesses also will benefit from the flood of new venture capital that will result from cutting capital gains taxes.

Michiganians looking toward retirement will benefit from expanded Individual Retirement Account coverage, including a new, full spousal IRA and the capital gains tax cut. (More than 40 percent of American families own stocks directly or indirectly. American seniors, currently 12 percent of the population, realize 30 percent of all of America's capital gains.)

People in our state considering their legacy to their children, especially small, family business owners and farmers, will be helped by a substantial cut in the effective death tax.

Michiganians will enjoy a cleaner environment. Urban families in particular too often must live near contaminated sites because the

owners have abandoned them and no one else can afford to clean them up. That is why I worked to include in this bill a "brownfield" provision allowing those who clean up these sites to expense their costs on an accelerated basis. This will encourage businesses to clean and put to use, areas that now contaminate our cities.

Americans of all ages and all generations will benefit from this bipartisan tax relief package. Unfortunately, some in the administration are trying to undermine tax cuts by making false claims that the package does not do enough for Americans of moderate means.

For example, some seek to paint the capital gains tax cut as a giveaway to the rich. That simply isn't true.

According to a recent Congressional Budget Office study, one quarter of those claiming capital gains earn \$25,000 or less per year; 57 percent claiming capital gains earn under \$50,000. Four out of five households claiming capital gains earn less than \$100,000. As important, all Americans benefit from capital gains cuts because they promote innovation, productivity and new business starts. What is more, a full three-fourths of the package's total benefits go to people who make between \$20,000 and \$75,000 a year. And 82 percent of the tax relief goes directly to families with children.

American workers are more productive than any of our foreign competitors, and their productivity gives us the highest standard of living in the world. But we cannot maintain our standard of living under the current, anti-investment tax code. If Michigan is to continue prospering, we must stop the federal government from imposing one of the world's highest capital gains tax rates.

This is a modest tax proposal, cutting \$85 billion in taxes between now and 2002. That is less than one percent of the total federal tax burden for that period. The package targets relief at the middle class, but spreads it to Americans of all ages and in all walks of life. Following 16 years of broken promises and increased taxes, this package is the least Congress can do, and the least Michigan should accept.

Sen. Spencer Abraham, R-Michigan, is a member of the Senate Budget Committee.

Keep government role open

There must have been moaning and gnashing of teeth at the Mackinac Center in Midland in the wake of a wise U.S. Supreme Court ruling against "privatization."

The Mackinac Center, you'll recall, has a pile of right-wing money to publish supposedly scholarly articles and circulate them around the state. The Detroit News and a few outstate papers reprint some of their essays. I find their stuff long on glib rhetoric but short on facts.

The Mackinac Center's propositions are that 1) everything government does is wrong and inefficient and 2) everything business does is right and efficient. It makes as much sense as saying everything brown-eyed people do is right, and all work of blue-eyed people is trash.

It even publishes an occasional magazine-length compilation of how wonderful privatization is. And it is chiefly responsible for generating the nonsense about how "charter schools" with taxpayer aid are so wonderful, even when their MEAP scores stink.

The Supreme Court ruled June 23 that employees of companies that run prisons under state contracts are not entitled to immunity from prisoner lawsuits.

Justice Stephen G. Breyer's majority opinion said the traditional immunity doctrine can't be extended to employees of a business doing governmental work under contract.

In this case, an inmate of a Tennessee prison sued two guards employed by Corrections Corp. of America for injuring him when keeping him under restraint. Corrections Corp.'s name is well known among politicians studying the possibility of "privatizing" Michigan jail and prison operations. It operates 49 correctional centers in 11 states and England; none in Michigan.

Breyer surveyed the histories of the immunity doctrine and prisons. Privately-run prisons were common in the 18th and 19th Century prisons of the U.S. and England. But those private operators did not have immunity from prisoner lawsuits then, and the nation's highest court saw no reason to give it to them now.

It was a bipartisan view. Breyer, a Clinton appointee, was joined by Ruth Bader Ginsburg, another Clinton appointee, and three Republican appointees — John Paul Stevens, Sandra Day O'Connor and David Souter.

Dissenting from the GOP right were Justices Antonin Scalia, Anthony Kennedy, Clarence Thomas and Chief Justice William Rehnquist. There's no problem with a private company



TIM RICHARD

doing jobs for government that aren't inherently governmental, such as building roads, cleaning buildings and serving food.

But there's a big problem when government contracts out governmental work. Suppose your school district's buses are privately operated and you want to learn the record of the driver of your kid's bus. You need to know the first and last names of the driver and the home address before the Secretary of State looks it up.

You file a Freedom of Information Act request with the bus company, which tells you to go to blazes because it's a business and not subject to FOIA.

Paige St. John, the former Detroit News environmental reporter now working for the strike paper, the Sunday Journal, tells of the time she asked for trash incinerator information from the city of Detroit. The city told her the private contractor had the records.

The private contractor said 1) it didn't have to give her anything under FOIA and 2) it couldn't even talk to her because then-Mayor Coleman Young insisted in the contract it never talk to the public press.

That's how politicians use "privatizing" to hide stuff from you.

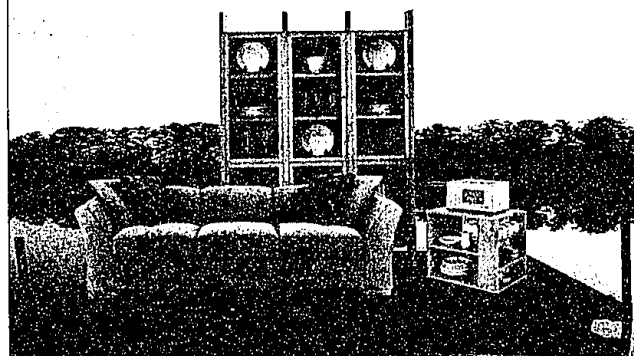
Business is best when it provides niche services and products for those who can pay.

Government should do the things that benefit the common weal — public safety, public schools, courts, parks and pollution treatment. In this context, Gov. John Engler was 100 percent right in selling off the Accident Fund (worker's comp) and the vaccine manufacturing lab.

Privatization is dangerous. Ask the Tennessee prison guards.

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events.

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