

LETTERS

Fortunate to have Inch

For the past 20 years, the Farmington Board of Education has been fortunate to have an elected member with the commitment, the professional expertise, and the genuine desire to make Farmington the best school district in the state. That person is Jack Inch. A resident of Farmington for almost 30 years, Jack has served this community for most of those years in countless ways. As economics professor at Oakland Community College, Jack has worked with many of our friends, neighbors, and family members to enrich their lives with learning. But his talent is not limited to the college classroom. He has had the desire to work with all levels of learning, from K-12th grade, as a board member of the Farmington Public Schools. And once again, he has decided to run for this position.

How many people can we list that have dedicated 20 years to serve on the Farmington public school board? How many people can we list that have served the learning community at all these levels? How many people have continued this commitment long after their children have graduated from the district? How many people can we list that have done it all so well and with the respect of colleagues and the community? I only know of one - Jack Inch!

We are all fortunate that Jack Inch has decided to once again contribute and serve our community and run for the Farmington public school board.

**Maria Arantari
math professor
Oakland Community College
Orchard Ridge Campus**

Suffer consequences

What is all the fuss about concerning "high speed police chases or pursuits"? Are we again more concerned about the "rights" of the perpetrator and faulting the police officers performing their duty?

ANY attempt to flee ANY police stop should warrant a mandatory five-year prison sentence. Causing the injury of an innocent person while fleeing the police should bring the sentence up to 10 years mandatory. Causing the death of an innocent person while fleeing should bring a mandatory 20-years-to-life sentence with no chance of parole.

Punishment should be firm, swift and ENFORCED!

The two-year mandatory sentence for committing a felony with a weapon has held up in courts and has been enforced. *Five-, 10- or 20-

year sentences may not put an end to such pursuits, but, they should reduce the number of such chases!

Put the responsibility for the decision to flee on the perpetrators and let them suffer the consequences of their choice! Where is there a problem?? Next case!

**Anthony B. Brehler
Livonia**

Costly fare of flying

Fares, schedules, and routes were determined by accountants and bureaucrats during airline regulation. Competitors extolled the quality of their food or the beauty of their stewardesses - there were no bargain rates for families.

De-regulation brought fierce competition. Prices plummeted and air travel doubled. Northwest Airlines faced bankruptcy and the likelihood of unemployed workers won sympathy. Northwest survived to provide jobs and profits, but management is blamed for the bad service of employees deliberately doing unsatisfactory work. If negotiations with the union are not settled fairly, bankruptcy will again become an option.

Northwest specializes in non-stop flights. This convenience is costly if planes are not full -

it works only on a large scale. Bulk travel is not luxurious but it is popular - 79 percent of all passengers at Metro choose Northwest when other services are only a block away. This business is labeled a monopoly for being successful. "Experts" suggest an increase in fares and decrease in flights would put the country back on its feet. Of course! It could no longer afford to fly.

**Hank Borman
Farmington**

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity and brevity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a daytime contact telephone number. No anonymous letters will be published.

The week prior to an election, this newspaper will not publish letters that discuss new issues, since last-minute attacks don't allow a chance for rebuttal. Responses to already-published issues will be accepted.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335; faxed to (248) 477-9722; or e-mailed with your name, city of residence and phone number to dvarga@oe.homecomm.net

Fieger gets low score on state budget knowledge

It would take a miracle. The reference is not to Geoffrey Fieger's chances of winning the Democratic nomination for governor, or even to his chances of being elected.

The miracle would be if he, or anyone, could finance schools the way Fieger suggests.

The flamboyant Oakland County medical malpractice lawyer was on the May 3 Channel 7 "Spotlight" where three of my journalistic brethren asked him about the sales and income taxes.

"Way too high," Fieger said. How would he cut them? "Whaddya mean, how? You just cut 'em. I don't think we need that 6 percent sales tax." And of the 4.4 percent personal income tax, he said, "I'm not sure it's necessary for this state."

A reporter asked how his tax-cut attitude would go over with the Michigan Education Association, the teachers' union that is a big player in the

Democratic Party.

"I'm gonna make sure the lottery dollars really go to education," said Fieger. "They do," said a reporter. Fieger scoffed.

Fieger was wrong, and the reporter was right. It works like this:

The state school aid fund is about \$10 billion (rounded off). The state lottery raises about \$600 million - just 6 percent of the school aid fund.

The sales tax raises about \$3.67 billion, of which \$2.69 billion goes to schools.

The income tax grosses \$5.8 billion, with \$800 million going to school aid. The lottery is a very minor part of the school finance pot.

Now if any mortal human were to try to finance \$10 billion in school aid with a lottery that produces 6 percent, it would take a miracle.

Jesus performed such a miracle (Matthew 6) when he took five barley

leaves and two fishes and fed 5,000 men and an uncounted number of women and children. I doubt Geoffrey Fieger can feed a \$10 billion school aid bill with lottery money.

Fieger went on to deprecate government. He echoed the chant of the Mackinac Center zealots that everything government does is bad, and everything business does is good.

"There's corruption. If a private business, like I run, did that, it would have been in bankruptcy a long time ago," Fieger said.

John Engler has been running state government far better than, say, Kmart was run in the 1985-95 era. Government inefficient? Tell us about America Online.

I get far better help at the government libraries of Novi, Livonia, Farmington and Birmingham than I got at Sears when I used to shop there.

State Treasurer Doug Roberts, Engler's economic guru, is far better

at his job than the CFOs of Heileman Browning and Ames department stores. Both private entities incurred so much expansion debt that they couldn't make interest payments and had to seek federal court bankruptcy protection. Ames was liquidated.

Fieger predicted Engler next year will be selling hot dogs at the Lansing Lugnuts stadium. "It'll be his first job. He's never had a job outside politics," Fieger said.

Engler grew up on a beef farm. I've never heard him talk about it, but I can understand why he might choose government service, though it doesn't pay as well as suing doctors and hospitals.

But it is a job - listening to PTAs and parents, building prisons, trying to keep a world-class university on track, keeping state parks functioning. I might disagree with Engler's and my legislators' decisions, but I never would be so crass as to suggest



TIM RICHARD

they don't have real jobs. Just as hard as my neighbors at Ford, Hagopian and law offices. Fieger has yet to spend an hour studying the state budget. And it will take more than an hour to become as proficient in it as Engler, Roberts, and Sens. Bob Geake and Alma Wheeler Smith on the Appropriations Committee.

For now, Fieger gets, as they say on the MEAP tests, a score of "Not Yet Novice."

Tim Richard reports on the local implications of state and regional events. His voice mail number is (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1881.

Driver's ed is vital for all teens

In the wake of the settlement of the Durant case that forced the state to repay school districts for past underfunding, the Legislature decided to save money by dropping the requirement that all school districts had to offer free driver training.

Those of us who have some personal stake in encountering well-trained young drivers on the road wondered what school boards would do in response. Although around 20 school districts have dropped driver education programs altogether, most - around 80 percent by informal survey - will continue to offer the program.

But at what cost? Driver training programs offered by schools cost an average of \$200 per pupil. But the state will contribute less than half the cost for driver's ed, leaving a significant shortfall. I'd guess most school districts are either going to charge for their own driver training programs or subcontract with private companies that charge something like \$300 a pop.

Either way, the risk is that some kids (especially poor ones from poorer school districts) are going to leave school without exposure to driver training. This is bad. Both nationally and in Michigan, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers, and study after study has demonstrated that kids who take driver education courses are safer drivers than those who have not.

Why am I so concerned about all this? Simple. My son, Nathan, turned 16 this March.

Up to March, I had maintained a naive belief that I had a reasonably firm grip on the trials and tribulations of adolescence. But with Nathan's dawning recognition that the rite of passage of the 16th birthday opened the regulatory door to actually taking the road alone in a car, life in our family changed irrevocably.

First were the negotiations about just how many milliseconds after he turned 16 would elapse before he would take his driving test and get his driving license. Fortunately, these talks evolved into discussions of just how he would take responsibility for finding and enrolling in the required defensive driving course.

Second, and far more protracted, were the negotiations around cars. "Get him a beater with a heater," said Kathy, my wife, who argued persuasively for a four-cylinder model that featured only laborious acceleration and weighed in excess of two metric tons. Nathan preferred something rather sportier, preferably in red.

Kathy and I set out a series of parameters not to be exceeded - price, speed, insurance cost - and some jointly held requirements - air bags and a stick shift. We told Nathan that within these limits, the choice of a car was his. Then



PHILIP POWER

Driver training programs offered by schools cost an average of \$200 per pupil.

he and I took to the roadways, this newspaper firmly in hand, searching for used cars.

Despite one conflict situation - over a Mazda MX-6, as I recall - the car shopping turned out reasonably well. We settled on a 1993 Honda Civic coupe (red, to be sure) with 78,000 miles on it. We took it to the reliable mechanic for an evaluation and returned to the used car dealer, check in hand.

So now Nathan is driving, and every time we see his car disappearing up the driveway, Kathy and I die just a little bit. And every night we go to bed before he gets home, we wonder whether the next thing we hear will be the late night phone call from a policeman.

That's why I worry about driver training and what school districts are going to do about funding it.

I doubt this Legislature is going to re-mandate driver training for all schools, although I wish it would. I suspect a lot of schools are going to buy into the easy rationale that it's OK to duck responsibility for driver training, even though good driving skills are as essential in today's world as facility with a computer keyboard or the traditional reading, writing and math.

The fact is that younger drivers are the most dangerous driving group. Younger drivers who had not taken driver training are the most dangerous driving group of all. Schools ought to work hard to make driver training available to all kids, not just those whose families can afford it.

Phil Power is chairman of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., the company that owns this newspaper. He welcomes your comments, either by voice mail at (734) 953-2047, Ext. 1880, or by e-mail at ppower@eonline.com

OFFERING 3 WAYS TO AFFORD THE FURNITURE YOU'VE ALWAYS WANTED

1. PAY CASH AND RECEIVE

AN EXTRA
8% DISCOUNT

OR

2. ONE YEAR INTEREST FREE

12 Equal payments,
interest free
with 30% down
Minimum \$500 purchase

OR

3. WE WILL PAY YOUR 6% SALE TAX!

SAVE 25% - 40% on:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| • Pennsylvania House | • Butler | • Hooker | • Canal Dover |
| • Thomasville | • Bradington | • Stiffel | • Restonic |
| • Hargen | • Young | • Hakman | • Howard Miller |
| • Vanguard | • Charleston | • Conover | • Jasper Cabinet |
| • Bob Timberlake | • Forge | • Sligh | • Superior |
| • Nichols & Stone | • King Hickory | • Dinaire | • Athol |
| | • Lexington | • Hitchcock | • I.M. David |

Sale Ends May 23, 1998



CLASSIC INTERIORS FURNITURE

20292 MIDDLEBELT, LIVONIA (South of 8 Mile) (248) 474-6900

* All discounts are off manufacturers suggested retail prices * All previous sales excluded * Offer not valid in conjunction with any other promotional discount.

Mon., Thurs., Fri. 9:30-6:00
Tues., Wed., Sat. 9:30-5:30
Open Sunday 1-5

