

## LETTERS

## Vote change: Jaske

To be blunt, the state was sued to get the money they didn't pay for services they required. Now the Farmington Board of Education has the fiduciary responsibility to return the money to the people. Otherwise they are taxing the people twice that already paid for services rendered. They also can be sued. By not returning the money they have proven to me without a doubt, we need some new school board members not the ones presently there.

My vote will be for Melody Jaske. She is a responsible parent coming forth to the needs of the people in the community and is adding herself by giving up her time to help others in dire need. God help us at this time, we need a change now.

By reducing the bond voted in above what the state returns to us — we are still one of the highest per pupil taxpayers.

My other point is — all this money was not needed, if they can wait for years to collect interest on the bond funds before they need to use it for whatever purpose.

How can we have confidence in him? What are they teaching our children?

Forgive my harsh tone; kindness doesn't seem to work.  
George Strolcnuk  
Farmington

## Dedicated, proven

Cathy Webb is a dedicated leader on the school board as well as in the community. She has proven to be a trustee who is prepared, knowledgeable and ethical. As a long time resident of Farmington Hills, I am proud to support Cathy to a third term. Please cast your vote for Cathy Webb on June 8.

Betty Nicolay  
Farmington Hills

## Parent view needed

At the candidate's forum Thursday, May 28, in the untelevised portion, a group of concerned parents from Harrison High asked the candidates

about the pilot 4x4 blocking program approved by the Harrison staff. Classes would be structured in half-year semesters, four classes per semester with class time extended to 90 minutes. According to the parents posing the question, parental input was not solicited by the district before the approval occurred. This is precisely why I, Melody Jaske, decided to run for the Farmington Public School board. Our children are not test rats in a laboratory, they are human beings. Parents as the caretakers and nurturers of children have a right to be involved in the decision-making process affecting their child's education. It is the responsibility of the school board to make well-informed decisions based on proven educational practices and ample input from parents. Be assured that when I am elected on Monday, June 8 open communication will be a top priority for me as a Farmington school board trustee.

Melody Jaske  
Farmington

## Incumbents favored

I am an eight-year resident of Farmington Hills and I am writing to you about the issue of fairness and openness. As late as May 30, Channel 10, the community's link to our schools, the Farmington public schools bulletin board lists the names of the candidates for school board and no other information. Don't you think it would be nice to inform those of us without children in our schools the date of the election? I would hate to tune into the bulletin board after the election and find this information added to the slide.

This strongly favors the incumbent candidates and sends a message to those individuals worthy of a seat on the Farmington school board that there is no room at this time for them. This shows a lack of openness on the part of the board and administration. Is this the fairness we want from our school district?

Concerned voters should note our school board election will be held on Monday, June 8, even if the school board doesn't want us to know!

Kathy Smith  
Farmington Hills

## Standing on record

In withholding endorsement of my reelection (June 8) to the Oakland Community College board, the Observer & Eccentric chose just one incident in my 12-year tenure as a subject of criticism. It ignored the entirety of my service.

You said it was "grandstanding" when I objected to an expensive board retreat. You admitted that it was right of me to object. But then you argued — amazingly — that since I couldn't get the retreat I should have supported it to keep the board "from gaining such a public black eye."

First, I didn't make this a public issue. My objections to this retreat were made privately weeks ago. However, I was called for comment on it by another newspaper, which already was preparing its story. Do your reporters think it's "grandstanding" when someone answers their questions? I didn't create the "black eye" — the publicity did.

Evidently the O&E thinks that "getting along" with other board members is more important than how taxpayer money is spent. I don't. The voters didn't elect me so that I would shut up when I disagreed. Your suggestion that I should have been quiet about a waste of money is completely contrary to what I'd expect from any responsible newspaper.

Does the O&E want board members who simply cave in to the majority, in the name of "harmony"? That's not me. I stand on my record of service to our great college.

Judith B. Wiser  
chairwoman  
OCC Board of Trustees

## Vocational training deserves equal footing with college prep

The Michigan Senate last week lost an opportunity to make a good idea even better.

Sen. Mike Rogers, a solid conservative Republican from Brighton, introduced legislation to let 12th-graders who have completed vocational education courses in high school enroll for further training in a community college or a vocational charter school. The advanced school would also get a cut of the state aid money, currently averaging \$5,462 per pupil.

Rogers' reasoning was perfectly sensible. "We shouldn't look down at people who work with their hands," he said.

He's right. For many years, American public schools have operated in a peculiar two-track mode, utterly inappropriate for a country that prides itself on not having a class system.

For kids who want to go on to college, schools offer all kinds of academic courses designed to prepare students to get good scores on the ACT or SAT tests that have a lot to do with college admissions. Teachers and counselors make it perfectly clear to kids that pupils have to show real achievement, both in grade point average and in extracurricular activities, to buff up their resumes to get into a good college.

But schools more often than not give the brush-off to kids who are not particularly interested in going to college — kids who want to work with their hands, in Rogers' words. Vocational education programs are scorned, not particularly well-taught and placed in classrooms equipped with stuff out of the 19th century.

Modern manufacturing, for example, requires knowledge of statistical process control, administered through computers, and computer-controlled milling machines. But Michigan's high schools offer antique drill presses and hand-me-down socket wrenches in their shops.

And, excepting the building construction trades, Michigan has almost no apprenticeship programs that provide kids with an opportunity to learn a solid trade and ease the transition from school to work.

Rogers' bill, helping kids who want to go on to advanced vocational training and making it easier to pay for it, is a good start at remedying this long-standing problem.

But when Sen. Ken DeBeauvoise, a moderate Democrat from Macomb County, offered a helpful amendment to require students to pass their 11th-grade proficiency test before taking advanced vocational training, the fur started flying.



PHILIP POWER

Particularly disingenuous during the subsequent debate was Sen. Mike Bouchard, R-Birmingham, who used the circular argument that because neither employers nor colleges now require MEAP results, the entire test should be abandoned.

"Students would have to achieve the basic MEAP standard," said DeBeauvoise. "That's what the business community was asking for. We don't do it (prepare young people for jobs) by dumbing down the process." Rogers objected, arguing that the amendment would "add a barrier where there should be an opportunity."

"We need the MEAP to tell us if the high school is working," urged Dianne Byrum, D-Onondaga. "They (students enrolling in advanced vocational classes) need the skills of math, reading, science and social studies. These are basic building blocks."

Particularly disingenuous during the subsequent debate was Sen. Mike Bouchard, R-Birmingham, who used the circular argument that because neither employers nor colleges now require MEAP results, the entire test should be abandoned. (Attentive readers will remember that Bouchard's district includes Birmingham and Troy school districts, where some 80 percent of juniors skipped the MEAP test this year.)

Eventually, DeBeauvoise's amendment was defeated, on a straight party-line vote.

So it goes in Lansing. One step forward; one step back.

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@online.com

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