

OPINION

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.

Isn't it too early to campaign for congress?

When State Rep. Andrew Raczkowski (R-Farmington Hills) announced his candidacy for Congress last week, we were a little taken aback.

First and foremost, we were struck by the fact that the seat for which he says he's running doesn't exist. And we're at least seven months from knowing whether it even will.

Of course, the odds are that Farmington and Farmington Hills — with their combined population of 92,500 residents — will end up in the redistricting shuffle. Oakland County gained in the 2000 census, and while Detroit lost big, its two minority seats are protected under federal law.

That means lines have to be redrawn out here, and the rules are clear about protecting natural boundaries as much as possible. Oakland County's population is enough to account for another congressional seat.

What doesn't make sense is starting the campaign for that seat now.

One could argue — and we're certain many will — that Rep. Raczkowski is perfectly capable of fulfilling his legislative duties and standing at ground zero in a congressional campaign. He's young, energetic and politically plugged in to a group of supporters who will no doubt do much of the leg-work for him.

While Raczkowski points out that his home phone number is and always has been accessible, that's a whole world away from having his mind completely on the job at hand.

Considering a term-limited lawmaker, he should be preparing for a future outside Lansing. But financing a congressional campaign requires raising vast amounts of cash, many times more than Raczkowski has put forward in all three

of his campaigns for the state house.

The Federal Election Commission reports the average cost of winning a seat in Congress was \$875,000 four years ago. According to Public Disclosure Inc., a Washington research firm founded by two former election commission employees, incumbent 11th District Rep. Joe Knollenberg raised more than \$1.2 million during the 2000 election year. Of that amount, \$332,000 came from political action committees and \$791,000 from individual contributors.

Raczkowski has faced down critics of his reliance on PAC dollars, saying the organizations are perfectly legal and made up of people who live in his district, people who band together to support causes in which they believe. The reality, however, is that federal elections are won and lost on the game board of political influence, and the halls of Congress are lined with men and women whose job it is to remind political candidates who helped them get to where they are.

If he's preparing for a federal-level campaign, Raczkowski has a lot of work to do. Fund-raising may be a large part of the battle, but there's also the prospect of turning his attention to a whole new slate of issues, from the U.S. military to foreign policy.

This is the arena into which Raczkowski has already stepped, albeit gingerly. It's easy to understand his enthusiasm and his drive to move forward. Let's face it — having a congressional representative from Farmington Hills would be a plus for both communities.

We urge him to remember to keep at least one foot firmly planted in our little corner of the world, too.

County should happily split cost for Detroit 300

You're on the beach in Florida over spring break or waiting in line to tour the White House in Washington, D.C. Small talk leads to the inevitable question: Where are you from?

For the vast number of people in Oakland County — indeed, the entire metropolitan area — the answer is easy and obvious: Detroit. Not Southfield, not Rochester, not Oxford ... simply, Detroit. To anyone who lives in another part of the United States or beyond, the recognition is immediate.

For better or worse, for right or wrong, people across the country and around the globe think of the entire region of southeastern Michigan as Detroit. Whether suburban residents like it or not, there comes a time when perception transcends reality.

Which brings us to the question at hand: Should Oakland County contribute \$250,000 to Detroit 300 Inc., the committee that is overseeing plans for the anniversary celebration of the city's tri-centennial. The Oakland County Board of Commissioners is expected to vote at its May 10 meeting on whether to make that contribution to the organization.

Although it seems reasonable for the board to approve the donation, the request is not without its critics.

County Executive L. Brooks Patterson is on record as saying, "It's a chance for Oakland County to be a good neighbor." But some commissioners are balky at the idea of helping finance Detroit's birthday bash.

In a word, hogwash.

First of all, the money is not a gift to the city of Detroit's government. Detroit 300 is a non-profit organization formed exclusively to plan and execute the massive celebration already under way. The group is chaired by Edsel Ford II and includes many heavy-hitters among the region's business and community leaders.

Second, all area units of government are being asked to chip in. The city of Detroit and state of Michigan have already ponied up, while Wayne County, Macomb County and Essex County (Ontario) are all still considering the request to contribute.

Third, the vast majority of Detroit 300's operating budget of \$27 million has been donated by a Who's Who of corpo-

rate sponsors. They include General Motors Corp., Ford Motor Co., Daimler-Chrysler, Compuware Corp., the Kresge Foundation and Guardian Industries, as well as literally hundreds of other donors large and small.

The group has planned many events that are sure to draw millions of visitors, many from Oakland County. The list includes Sail Detroit, a family festival, a homecoming concert and countless others.

It's small-minded to think of Oakland County as existing in a vacuum separate from Detroit. Certainly the county has become practically self-sufficient in terms of commerce, industry, recreation and housing.

It's entirely possible to go from cradle to grave without ever setting foot on the other side of Eight Mile Road — and there are certainly those who take a stubborn pride in doing just that.

But remember this: Without a Detroit — a mighty, proud and vibrant Detroit — there would be no Oakland County, at least not as we know it. The genesis for all that is "Detroit" sprouted from the men and women who were brave and strong enough to create a great city where none previously existed.

Another thing to consider: Rare is the person in these parts who did not at one time live in Detroit or have an ancestor who lived there. Although the city's population has fallen below 1 million for the first time in decades, it's impossible to calculate the number of people who have passed through Detroit before moving on to one of its suburbs, near or far.

The French explorer Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac landed upon the shore of the Detroit River on July 24, 1701. It's doubtful he or anyone else could have imagined that from a small trading post would one day emerge a metropolitan area encompassing more than 4 million people and stretching over five counties.

Detroit is a symbol of industrial might and urban blight, foot-tapping music and mind-numbing crime; ethnic immigration and rigid segregation; Midwestern winters and arctic winters. To those of us who live here, it's all that and so much more.

So, happy birthday to us. Thanks for the invite. Of course we'll split the tab.



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LETTERS

Congrats, Brooks

The trend in Oakland County is undeniable ... the Republican Party must broaden its appeal to attract and keep moderate voters — and it can accomplish that by recruiting and supporting mainstream candidates for public office.

I applaud L. Brooks Patterson in his attempt to expand the base of support for the Republican Party in Oakland County. Traditionally, this county has a well-educated, financially successful, independent population. In the general elections, more and more residents are casting their votes for candidates that reflect moderate, mainstream America.

By welcoming back into the Republican Party those who would not deny a woman her decision concerning reproductive rights and striving to become the Big Tent that was envisioned in years past, the party can again become a political force. Until that happens, look for more losses by the socially conservative Republicans to mainstream candidates in partisan races in county, state and national elections.

Jan C. Dolan
retired state legislator
Farmington

Healthy Living

Promoted and supported by the United Health Organization, Project Healthy Living is all about helping people discover possible health risks.

On Friday, April 6, Botsford Hospital and the Farmington Area Commission on Aging sponsored Project Healthy Living 2001 at the Costick Activities Center (Site 66). The day was both

rewarding and successful.

Over 60 community volunteers and medical personnel joined together and gave their time and support to help area residents with this annual health-screening program. Area physicians, businesses, and organizations contributed to or supported the program. This successful health event was a true community effort.

As a result of this effort, there was a 66-percent increase in participant registration from last year. More importantly, however, medical personnel made several referrals for participants with identified health risks. And, as the staff of UHCO points out ... "If we do saves only one life, then we have been successful." Truly, this was a successful event.

However, this event could not have happened without those who so generously gave of their time and support. So, on behalf of the Farmington Area Commission on Aging, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the following: the many community volunteers and medical personnel, the staff of the Costick Activities Center, the Farmington Observer, Northwest Gazette, Dr. Steve Forche, Dr. Brian Syrigel, the Farmington Civic Theater, Nina Salvaggio, Botsford Hospital, the United Health Organization, Channel 7, the United Way, Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Comcast and The Detroit News.

Project Healthy Living 2001, Site 66, could not have happened without you. Thank you!

Loretta Conaway

Project Healthy Living chairwoman Liz McConnell co-chairwoman

Take action to unite

In writing, my hope is that we will all unite in taking action to bring peace to our communities. I, like you, have seen the effects of a world at unrest.

We have seen wars, hatred and much death. This death is not only upon foreign lands but also right in our schools and homes. On April 20, 1999, the tragedy of Columbine High School occurred. On March 6, 2001, almost two years later, we had another horror in a school in Santa Fe, Calif.

This shows that we have done nothing to change the hearts and minds of the students to make sure this does not occur again. Unless we get to the cause of these tragedies, unless we stop trying to put a Band-Aid on the symptoms of a sick society, we will continue to mourn without hope of change. My hope is that you will see there is a Peaceful Solution and a positive way to change the way our society is heading.

On Feb. 23-25, 2001, the Third Global Conference on Peace was hosted by the House of Yahweh in Abilene, Texas. It was co-convened by Yiray Hawkins, from Abilene, and Oryema Johnson, from Canada.

There were 16 countries represented there, including men and women from China, Russia, Israel and Nigeria, to name just a few. Representatives from various peace organizations across the United States were also in attendance.

Though the people came from many nations, the problems all stemmed from the same cause: a lack of education in the laws of moral principles. It was agreed upon by all that for proper education, starting at a very young age, all forms of the negative effects that we see in modern day society would be eliminated.

The only way to stop hate and killing is through education, taught through the laws in the Peaceful Solution," said the representative from Israel. The representative from America totally agreed with this statement.

These two men have seen the devastating effects of their countries at war, because only war is taught there. Now they will be taking back with them hope, through the teaching of the Peaceful Solution.

What is the Peaceful Solution? The Peaceful Solution is a set of moral principles that can be taught to all people. Everyone who is taught and practices The Peaceful Solution will greatly benefit from these principles.

I urge you to obtain and consider this information. Free samples of this program are being offered. To receive your free copy, call (888) 613-9494, or write to The Peaceful Solution, P.O. Box 2442, Abilene, Texas 79604; or e-mail: info@peacefulsolution.com and request the Peaceful Solution program which was offered at the Third Global Conference on Peace in Abilene, Texas.

You have the opportunity and the responsibility to do something to make a change.

Derrick Moore
Southfield

Tragic mistake?

The fact that Russia presently has an inventory of 6,000 nuclear warheads on 2,300 missiles, thanks to our aid, still poses a definitive threat but worse than that is the armament and personnel being maintained and increased by China.

It presently maintains the world's largest standing army with 2.5 million troops under arms. It has a Navy with 260,000 sailors, 60 conventional subs, six nuclear submarines and a surface fleet of 40 Frigates, and 20 destroyers, all of which carry anti-ship cruise missiles.

Keep in mind that those missiles were useless a few years ago. They could shoot them into the air at any time and they never knew where the missiles would land. Today, they have the technology to pinpoint their targets accurately thanks to having undeniably purchased the technology from Bill Clinton and the National Democratic Party.

In addition, China has 50 amphibious landing ships and a massive ship-building program. Its Air Force has 5,300 combat aircraft, 650 transport aircraft and more than 400,000 personnel. With the additional aid of U.S. technology this despotic nation has built 18 sites for CSS-4 ICBMs capable of hitting the United States. Is it any wonder that its sabers are rattling with increasing frequency? In the last 20 years China has steadfastly maintained that the United States is its enemy.

Throughout history it has been adequately depicted that a nation could ensure peace through strength. The last president to prove this was Ronald Reagan. Now with all that is going on and with Russia arming the rogue nations, our congressmen are spending precious time in the hollowed chambers of the House and Senate and arguing over McCain-Feingold and how best to spend our money for their individual re-elections.

You figure. Only those who have lived through the era of Pearl Harbor can fully appreciate the enormity of this tragic lapse in the defense of our country.

George M. Haddad
Farmington

Share your opinions

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your full name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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