

OUR VIEWS

Candidates, please - a little travel time

It was inevitable. Sooner or later the candidates for the State House District 37 seat would out-PR themselves.

Last Thursday, Republican Valerie Knol and Democrat Aldo Vagnozzi scheduled press conferences within half an hour of one another - hers at the Secretary of State's office on Drake to unveil "Valerie's Vision" for education and his at campaign headquarters on Nine Mile Road to discuss the wretched state of health insurance in the state of Michigan.

She had a group of female political candidates and the wife of Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick Posthumus. He had a group of folks bring their dogs to make his point.

The two events clearly defined the differences between the candidates. Their philosophical positions and campaign approaches couldn't be any farther apart. But they do have something in common, also demonstrated by these dueling press conferences.

As the eyes of the state focus on this hotly contested race, both Knol and Vagnozzi want to make a splash. Makes perfect sense. But isn't this all getting a little out of hand?

We wouldn't mind a press conference called to unveil new information or a new idea. So far, we really haven't heard much more than the same criticisms on the same topics, with the same proposed solutions reflecting the same political ideas we've been hearing about for months. It's all just wrapped a little differently.

The candidates themselves have commented on the sheer volume of candidate surveys, endorsement questionnaires, forums and debates in which they've been asked to participate. We have no idea how they find the time to participate in these additional press events; we're barely finding the time to cover them all.

But if they're going to insist on microphones at 20 paces, we have one request.

Valerie ... Aldo ... allow us a little travel time. Please?

Knollenberg best for U.S. Congress

For the first time since he was elected to office 10 years ago, Joe Knollenberg is in a real political race.

That's good. The voters need to focus their attention on who is going to represent them in Congress rather than just mark the ballot space next to a name one more time.

Knollenberg's opponent, West Bloomfield Democrat David Fink, is to be commended for raising issues, although some of his tactics are suspect. For example, Knollenberg didn't vote against prescription drugs, as Fink claims. He does support a prescription drug plan. We might not agree that it is the best one for the people, but it just isn't correct to say that he opposes prescription drug coverage for seniors.

But more than anything, when the dust settles, it is evident that Knollenberg best reflects the interests of the district. We endorse Joe Knollenberg for re-election.

Knollenberg is running for the new 9th U.S. Congressional District seat, which is replacing the old 11th House District. About 60 percent of the district is new, but it still remains in the heart of southeast Oakland County. And the shifting lines of the district boundaries haven't changed the concerns of the residents.

In his tenure in Congress, Knollenberg has demonstrated solid leadership skills. He is chairman of the subcommittee overseeing Washington, D.C., a troubled community, indeed, so he is acutely aware of problems of urban areas. He also is a member of the powerful Appropriations Committee and has steered some needed resources to our area.

He is a staunch conservative and may be faulted for following the party line too closely. But he remains in touch with his constituents, and they have solidly supported him.

He deserves the continued support of the voters and should be returned to Congress.



Joe Knollenberg



HAL BAILEY/Observer

State House candidate Democrat Aldo Vagnozzi joins Larry Cook and Larry's dog, Rocky, D.K. Gibson with her dog, Ougiey, Megan Taylor Kibler with Doogie and Jacqueline Cook. He and Republican opponent Valerie Knol scheduled press conferences Thursday within half an hour of each other.

LETTERS

Will miss Ron

Like many of the losses I've experienced recently, it will take some time for me to fully realize that Ron Oliverio is no longer with us.

His premature passing is a loss for his family and our community. He cared immensely for both. While his role may not have matched his ambitions he ultimately touched many lives.

We all wish the best for his family. His status as a public figure is what concerns me now.

It's probably safe to say that there is no one else quite like Ron in our community. Somehow he found out about things that many of us never could. Ron's eyes as a watchdog and voice for the people will be missed sorely.

Many people contribute in their own ways. It is a strength of our community to accept and find ways for many people to serve. More than building roads and protecting people, our community assets include the goodwill of the residents who call our community home.

Ron's ultimate gift to us may be the realization that our community goodwill still needs more improvement.

Gregory Wert
Farmington Hills

One man's opinion

(Phil Power's) column in the 10/10/02 issue of the Observer, regarding the Kwame Kilpatrick memo demanding favors from Jennifer Granholm if she wins the election, is another example of the liberal (i.e. Democrat) bias in the media.

In your column: 1) you trivialize the seriousness of the contents of the memo, 2) you readily let Kilpatrick off the hook because of what you call "youthful political inexperience," 3) you readily believe Granholm just because she said she didn't receive or read the memo, 4) you go so far as to state what Granholm would or would not do if she had read it, and 5) you state that Lt. Governor Dick Posthumus played the race card by making the memo public.

I believe Kilpatrick played the race card when he wrote or had someone write the memo for him. More importantly, I believe he expects favors from Granholm, if she wins the election, even with the memo being made public. You are being very naive to think otherwise.

Further, you deride Posthumus for "manufacturing wedge issues" to run against Detroit and Black Americans. That is exactly what the Democrats do. They are always attempting to pit one group of Americans against another: blacks against whites, poor against the rich, unions against management, gays against heterosexuals and seasoned citizens against anyone even talking about changing their social security or Medicare programs.

Have you condemned any Democrats in your column for doing this? Probably not.

Your position as chairman of the company that owns the newspaper provides you with the opportunity to state your obvious liberal opinion in the Observer.

But that's all it is, one man's opinion.

John Dzelinski
Farmington Hills

MEGA unfairly criticized

I agreed with the general views expressed in the editorial published on 9/19/02 that endorsed the use of tax abatements as valuable economic development tools for the city of Farmington Hills.

However, the editorial unfairly criticized the Michigan Economic Growth Authority (MEGA) as having "tied the hands" of the Farmington City Council by requiring a local financial contribution to get job creation tax credits for economic development projects.

The fact is that state law requires a local "match" when the state awards job creation tax credits.

There is a good reason why the state does not award tax credits for business expansion projects without local financial partnership. The intent is not to strong-arm communities into giving up revenue. Not all communities welcome growth.

It is not the practice of the MEGA board to force development on a community that does not welcome it. The required local match is meant to ensure that the community is supportive and has a financial stake in the project.

Local and state incentives make good business sense and offer a great return on investment in the form of more jobs, increased tax revenue and spin-off businesses. Job creation tax credits have brought thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of investment to the state. This could not have happened without the support of the communities that ultimately won these projects.

The competition for investment dollars is fierce. State and local government must continue to work together to use all of the tools available to create jobs for Michigan workers.

Doug Rethwill
President and CEO, Michigan Economic Development Corporation

Letter in error

Supporters of my opponent continue to distort my positions on the issues in an attempt to hurt my campaign.

I don't mind criticism that is factual, but Susan Brauns' letter went beyond the truth when she said I was opposed to Proposal A when it comes to the school property tax.

I am the only candidate who has taken a pledge not to raise property taxes. That pledge, with my signature, is in my campaign office and was reported in a recent issue of the Observer. The only candidate to suggest a tax increase has been my opponent, who wants to boost the diesel fuel tax which cost will be passed on to the consumers.

Proposal A is part of the Michigan Constitution and cannot be changed by the Legislature. It would take a Constitutional Amendment to make any changes and I am opposed to such an amendment. I am more interested in working on getting more special educa-

tion funds for our school districts.

The Farmington School District has had to make several million dollars in general funds to make up for the state failing to meet its special education funding responsibility. Oakland County home owners recently had to pass a millage increase to meet the special educational and vocational education funds the state has failed to provide. This results in a hidden tax to fund state mandates.

Aldo Vagnozzi
Farmington Hills

Knol's best choice

Although I am a new resident of Farmington Hills and I'm relatively non-partisan, I have been quite interested in the close race for the House Seat in Farmington.

After looking at it from both sides, I firmly believe Ms. Knol is a quick study in her first run for office, especially since the primary. I see an even keener focus from her these past months on presenting her vision. I would challenge anyone to find a single comment coming out of her campaign for the general election that could be labeled "negative." She is far too intelligent to draw attention away from her strategic advantage - a stronger vision for the community.

Even when goaded by the Press to react to questions about her opponent's age, Ms. Knol consistently has taken the high road, respectfully declining to engage the matter.

Yes, Ms. Knol will win this election based on the merits of her limitless energy, comprehensive understanding of community issues, and her strong business acumen. These qualities must surely be needed to insure the future of our community is contemporary with the rapidly evolving national and local landscape. We absolutely need someone like Ms. Knol, who can react quickly and diligently when the certainty of era-defining events come to be and affect our prominent and diverse community. The question is NOT whether Valerie Knol will stick to the issues but instead whether her opponent can stand tall enough with his own platform without being assisted by the propagation of old news.

Peter Ojeda
Farmington Hills

SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your 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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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.

QUOTABLE

"I will say this is the first group where they have involved such a broad citizen community."

Facilitator Shea Howell on this weekend's Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council planning event