

## OUR VIEWS

## Government works best when you vote

Every year about this time, we remind our readers to vote on Election Day.

And every year, we follow up with a disappointed "shame on you," when voter turnout remains abysmally low. So this year, we decided to do a little research about the history of voting and try to figure out why people just don't seem interested any more.

We discovered we're not alone in that effort. When national voter turnout dipped below 50 percent in 1996, a great many folks started to wonder just what was going on in America. Adults in the most powerful nation on earth, one of the few places where citizens are allowed to choose their representatives, just didn't seem to care.

Among the projects launched to examine this trend was "The Vanishing Voter Project," based on a study in the 2000 election year done by the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy. Chronicled in "The Vanishing Voter" by Thomas E. Patterson of Harvard University, the exhaustive study of nearly 100,000 voters in 99 surveys discovered some interesting — and sadly predictable — factors affect voter turnout:

- the weakening of the political parties as objects of thought and loyalty has reduced the incentive to participate, particularly among lower-income Americans

- modern campaign techniques are a turn-off for some citizens who otherwise have an interest in public affairs

- attack journalism has eroded trust and interest in partisan politics, particularly among young adults and soft news has reduced the level of election coverage which, in turn, has reduced the frequency with which Americans think and talk about the campaign; and

- registration closing dates and poll closing hours continue to keep some Americans from exercising their right to vote.

We hope Farmington and Farmington Hills voters recognize the importance of all races included on their ballots, particularly the five local contests for 47th District Court judge, 14th and 15th District County Commission, 37th District State House and 14th Senate District seats.

Each of those races represents an opportunity for voters to directly choose an elected official. There is no electoral college here.

Government works best when it's closest to the people. And it just doesn't get closer than this, folks.

## GOP ads merit apology

It is often said that politics is a "dirty" business. Political ads almost always distort and oversimplify the positions of opposing candidates.

That's politics. If you can't stand the heat, etc.

But this year, the message that is coming from one direction has such a bitter, divisive and destructive tone that it clearly steps over that imaginary line that separates rowdy politics from character assassination and irresponsible appeals to racism.

No less an eminence than former Republican governor William Milliken has rallied against the Republican advertising campaign for gubernatorial candidate Dick Posthumus. The usually conservative Detroit News editorial page took the unusual step of warning Posthumus, whom they have endorsed, that the divisive advertising might force them to reconsider.

But it goes beyond Posthumus' juvenile attacks on his Democratic opponent Jennifer Granholm.

What is most troubling is that Posthumus, and other GOP candidates, are playing on the ongoing racial tensions in our community to drive a wedge between the city of Detroit and the rest of the state. This campaign is aimed squarely at the Detroit suburbs, where many residents have an uneasy relationship with the predominantly black central city. The GOP campaign plays on that uneasiness.

It is by all appearances a coordinated campaign coming directly from the party itself.

Consider this: ■ Recent criticism of the Detroit Water and Sewer Department and recent rate increases have become a favorite target for GOP candidates. In a GOP flyer for state Senate candidate Laura Toy, her opponent Eileen DeHart is criticized for voting for money to help Detroit. DeHart is criticized for a tepid vote to help Detroit.

■ The temper in a tepid vote was raised by Posthumus over a memo never delivered and never seen by Jennifer Granholm. It was followed by a series of ads that played the image of Detroit's black mayor looming over the Democratic campaign.

Both political parties and the special interests that support them have long trivialized the election process with their distorting and demeaning advertising. But this year, the Republican Party in particular owes voters an explanation and an apology for their gross irresponsibility.



Harrison High School teacher Angela Leach feeds Danielle Liebowitz's ballot into a counting machine. Government students at the school and North Farmington voted on Monday.

BILL BRESLER / OBSERVER

## LETTERS

## Theater thanks

Now that the last piece of music is sent back, the sets are torn down, and the bills are paid, we would like to add another piece to our musical puzzle; thanking the "local" papers for their part in our success.

Yes, our success. Many performers, musicians, set crew, directors, as well as the Observer & Eccentric and the Farmington/Farmington Hills Gazette came together to make our 8th Annual School District / Community musical Footloose a production of which to be proud.

Bill Bresler of the Observer did his "usual" outstanding job helping to promote us through pictures, and Jon Montgomery of the FFH Gazette went "above and beyond" with the article he wrote. We've got to believe that these people with their promotional tools and skills definitely helped us to fill the seats of Hunt Auditorium.

So, as we look toward next year and a new production with so many talented members of the Farmington/Farmington Hills community, we applaud you and give you a well deserved standing ovation.

Dean and Sue Cobb

## Opposes sign

Regarding the Harrison High School sign: I think it is unattractive and a distraction to drivers.

The fact that the school would install the sign and use it before they had permission sends a very bad message to students. "If you don't like the rules, just break them and worry about it later."

I think the zoning board should take a more aggressive approach and take the sign down until it meets with the requirements.

Carol W. Hearall  
Farmington Hills

## Park needs path

It seems to me that if Farmington Hills is going to have a Memorial Park there should be a place for people to park so they can walk through it.

I am specifically talking about the Memorial Park on 11 Mile and Middlebelt. I was told to either park at Nardin Park Church or the Kroger parking lot. Now for young people that may not be a long walk, but for people who are either older and/or disabled that is an extremely long and also dangerous walk.

From Nardin Park you would have to walk down a hill and with a cane, walker or wheelchair that is much to far. From the Kroger parking lot with the same cane, etc. you must cross a very busy street.

It seems to me that the people who are buying these bricks for \$100 to make this memorial park are the elderly who want their departed loved ones remembered and for this they must put their bodies and sometimes lives in jeopardy to get to see the park.

I believe that a small parking lot adjoining the park could and should be created. It does not have to be large, maybe just two or three parking spaces but close enough where the elderly and disabled can walk to without endangering themselves. It could be erected on 11 mile just west of the park or on

Middlebelt just south of the park.

It is for the safety of all who would enjoy walking in the park and feeling that they and their memorialized loved ones have given something back to the community.

Pat O'Malley  
Farmington Hills

## Voter's guide

Candidates sound so much alike on taxes, education, health care and the environment that I had difficulty deciding who is more conservative and who is more politically correct. Now I study the Observer recommendations and vote for the opposition.

Hank Borgman  
Farmington

## Knol's better qualified

As we look at our State House race, there are certain objective facts to consider.

First, of the two candidates Valerie Knol has a higher level of educational accomplishment. Second, only one candidate — again Valerie Knol — is employed by the automotive industry. The auto industry is still the single largest component of Michigan's economy.

Third, only Valerie is currently active with our Farmington Public Schools. Fourth, only Valerie is endorsed by our current U.S. Congressman, State Senator and State Representative — people who know what it takes to be an effective legislator.

Finally, both the Detroit Free Press and Detroit News endorsed her during the primary — a feat very rarely accomplished in competitive races. The Free Press called her "energetic" and noted that protecting the environment was part of her platform.

The Observer referred to her as "articulate" and "bright" when she received their primary endorsement. I urge everyone to join me in looking out for the best interest of the State of Michigan and voting for Valerie Knol.

Christopher M. Cummins  
Farmington Hills

## Endorses Akebono

Within the last five years, Akebono Corporation, a Tier 1 automotive supplier, has honorably chosen Farmington Hills as the location of its Technical and Engineering Services facilities and its North American Headquarters. Recently, Akebono has requested that Farmington Hills consider property tax abatements so that it may expand its facilities.

Akebono also has facilities in Kentucky where it has recently expanded into the replacement parts market. As a result, it seeks further expansion of its engineering and testing facilities in either Kentucky or Farmington Hills. As they welcomed and prosperous business neighbor, we should welcome Akebono's desires with open arms and grant it the assistance that it needs.

Akebono, through its considered expansion, has stated that it appreciates and enjoys our community and that it would like to continue in its membership on a larger scale. Presently, Akebono is the 18th largest taxpayer in Farmington Hills and it employs 160 employees in its

facility. Akebono's expansion would provide a substantial number of new jobs. With an increased number of employees comes an increased amount of revenue to our local businesses.

Akebono has endorsed Farmington Hills and now it is time for Farmington Hills to reciprocate that endorsement.

Timothy L. Prochko, Esq.  
Farmington Hills

## Consider kids' needs

I am writing in response to Elizabeth O'Brien's letter to the editor, titled "Parents Betrayed".

As a public school parent, and a member of Our Lady of Sorrows parish, I have watched the debate over public school teachers in the Catholic school without getting involved. I think, though, that her letter requires a reply from another point of view. Elizabeth's point of view does not seem to take into account the needs of the children at the school.

As far as I can see, Our Lady of Sorrows students are missing opportunities that the public school children have. If your children attend school at Sorrows, they are missing out on art, music and instrumental music.

I am confused by her statement that this would "take God out of a Catholic school". What is she so afraid of? If God existed in the school before public school teachers came to it, would he not still be there? She also makes mention of the money that went into the Parish Center, and how it will be sold out to the public schools. Perhaps she needs reminding that the Parish Center is for all families, not just those with children at Our Lady of Sorrows School.

One last note: Our Lady of Sorrows students have ridden Farmington Public School buses for many years. Apparently, she has no problem with that. Since they already have an affiliation with the public schools, I would have to guess that they are Equal Opportunity Employers. This would mean that they could not hire teachers from only one religion.

Therefore, there is a good chance that some teachers presently employed by Sorrows are not Catholic. This would make them no different from the public school teachers. Which makes me wonder what the fight is all about.

Karen Sutherland  
Farmington

## 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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## QUOTABLE

"I wanted the students and teachers to know the system does work."

— U.S. Rep. Joe Knollenberg announcing a \$750,000 federal grant to widen 12 Mile in front of Harrison High School

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