

OUR VIEWS

Pilot program deserves a shot

Farmington school officials made a convincing case for an out of district open enrollment pilot program last week.

While we still believe more visioning is necessary, a one-year open door policy isn't going to do any more harm than losing more than \$100,000 to a couple dozen empty desks.

On its surface, the math seems pretty simple: 20 filled seats will bring in around \$160,000. Of course, the issue runs much deeper.

Parents have argued the district is taking their tax dollars to educate children who don't live here. While students will bring with them enough to cover the actual cost of materials and contribute to fixed costs, the lion's share of building costs, administration and teaching salaries will be paid locally. Out of district parents won't pay Farmington's "hold harmless" millage.

So technically speaking, parents are correct. However, elected officials must consider every alternative to cutting programs, laying off staff and closing schools, all of which would directly affect the quality of education. A one-year pilot allows time to evaluate this particular alternative, in a responsible manner.

Parents made some troubling arguments at last Tuesday night's meeting. Some wanted to see a school closed now rather than spending money to educate "outsiders." We and others have seen veiled bigotry in questions about what kind of students open enrollment might attract.

But what bothered us most was talk about trust, or the lack thereof, between parents and officials. The general message seemed to be, "If you do this when taxpayers have asked you not to, we can't trust you."

How far would a child get with that argument? How about a husband or wife?

School board members aren't elected to do taxpayers' bidding. They're elected to oversee what is arguably this community's largest and most difficult business, that of educating our children. Public comment is only one aspect of a complex decision-making process.

We hope instead of filing a lawsuit or simply turning their backs, parents take board member Gary Sharp's advice: "Don't get mad and go home. Get mad and get involved."

Change trash ruling regulating garbage

Ask southeast Michigan residents used to home rule and local control who dumps trash in their landfills and they'll probably be surprised to learn the answer is almost anyone who wants to.

A 1992 Supreme Court ruling has prevented Congress and states from outlawing outstate trash, which now is filling up landfills in southeast Michigan to capacity.

One culprit is Canada. That country in 2001 sent 44 percent of Michigan's imported waste to this state. Twenty percent of all Michigan trash in 2001 was imported.

Now U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Brighton, who recently was appointed to serve on the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, has introduced legislation that would limit the ability of Canada to export trash to Michigan.

This is Rogers' second year calling for change in federal laws regulating importing trash. Let's hope that his proposals gets whatever refinements are necessary to get a green light in Congress.

Adding its own call for action recently was the state House of Representatives, which passed a resolution encouraging Congress to allow states to limit the municipal solid waste they receive from out of state.

And set to take action once Rogers' bill passes Congress is state Sen. Nancy Cassia, R-Nowi, who has companion legislation ready for consideration in the Legislature.

That scenario follows on the heels of House Bills 4098 and 4099, reintroduced this year by Rep. Paul Gielegheem, D-Clinton Township, that would regulate the importing of solid waste and prohibit beverage containers in landfills.

Democrats think such legislation will withstand a court challenge, and that by citing a health hazard standard, they have an ace in the hole.

We are a nation of laws, but laws are made to protect the health, safety and welfare of those who create them.

Let's use the checks and balances between the Supreme Court and Congress to make the law work for us.



School board member Cathy Webb read "If You Give a Pig a Pancake" to an appreciative crowd as part of Alameda Early Childhood Learning Center's Reading Month celebration. Schools in Farmington and Clarenceville districts have spent the month of March demonstrating once again that reading is fun-damental.

LETTERS

Starting to roll

Now we are starting to roll... reform, accountability, improved schools, a business friendly environment and ethics policy improvements in New Detroit combined with responsible decisions on location investments by the business community (i.e. Compuware, EDS, GM, the Lions)...fixing rather than expanding roads, planning rapid transit and concern for land-use planning by all, will bring use the kind of economic strength, quality of life, clean hip cities that we deserve here in Michigan. Maybe we won't have to go to Toronto or Chicago to find it. Thank God, what a blessing.

Barry Meluk
Farmington

Give Granholm a break

In response to Monica Miller's "opinion" column March 6, since when did Jennifer Granholm become the chief spokesperson for abortion in Michigan? When she took her oath of office?

As I recall, most political oaths of office require one to support the Constitution of the United States and the laws of the land, one of which just happens to be Roe vs. Wade and has been on the books for many years. I don't recall any oath of office ever giving an official a choice of which laws to support.

If, as you state, "Our essential purpose is to raise awareness of a serious problem within the church and to encourage our bishops to recognize and deal with that problem..." then why not keep your argument within the church? Would you prefer not having any good Catholics holding public office?

All I can remember hearing our governor say or reading about in the news is that she "supports a woman's right to choose". That is the essence of Roe V. Wade. I feel that her attempt to lend support to Mercy High School's annual fundraiser shows that she supports enduring Christian values to impressionable young women, and is showing her concern for the well-being of our children by her support of education.

As you read this, a woman or girl is being raped somewhere. Is that her choice? Wade is her only choice - don't throw that away.

If you really want to help, start circulating petitions for a law that would make the "morning after pill" available without prescription or questions asked in every police station, hospital and corner drug-store on our land.

There are many situations in which a girl or woman finds herself, not of her own choosing, that presents a dilemma which is of concern to her and her God and those near and dear to her and her God and those near and dear to her that are none of your business. I ask you and all of you that are "holier than thou" to give our governor a break!

Bea Scaglione
Farmington Hills

Endorses Bolsen

I am writing this letter to endorse Karen L. Bolsen for a position on the school board for the Farmington Public Schools.

I have known Karen for 33 years. We first met as transfer students to the Farmington district when we were in ninth grade and our friendship has grown through the years.

Karen is a person of great character and has demonstrated a real commitment to our community. She is co-chair of the Multicultural/Multiracial (MCMR) Community Council, and has devoted herself to making our community a kinder and more accepting place for all to live through the various educational and community outreach programs she has helped to facilitate. Her ability and desire to promote understanding among people of various backgrounds is a valuable asset that she would bring to her role as a school board member.

Karen is a strong supporter of public education and her children are all students in the Farmington Public Schools. Working to continue to improve our schools is just one more step in Karen's continued commitment to our community. Karen is a kind, fair, caring, and honest person who I'm sure would put the needs of our students at the forefront of any decision that was to be made.

As a graduate of Farmington Public Schools and a special education teacher for 22 years, I am proud to endorse Karen Bolsen for the school board. She will work tirelessly to make our schools an even better place to learn, and that is a benefit to all of us in Farmington.

Kim Lennon
Farmington Hills

Vagnozzi supporter

Our new state representative, Aldo Vagnozzi, has begun his term with no time to waste. He is sponsoring bills to address the high cost of prescription drugs and the dumping of foreign trash in our state landfills.

These issues need to be dealt with now, and Aldo is on the job, representing our interests. Thank you, Aldo, for your efforts.

David and Jeannette Sharpe
Northville

Shared time

This letter concerns the issue of Shared Time with Our Lady of Sorrows School. We are parishioners who have used both the public schools and OLS School for our four children.

No one at Our Lady of Sorrows questions the quality of education from FPS. The issue is that we have chosen Catholic schools for our children because of the freedom of religious education and the total atmosphere of religious speech, activities and attitudes available in Catholic schools.

The OLS families are concerned that our freedom of religious expression will be excluded from part of our children's lives at OLS School. These are our buildings. In music, art, and gym classes, we want our children to continue to have the freedom to express their religion.

We think that the answer is a simple one, which should please all parties con-

cerned. Come into our classrooms, but continue to allow us the freedom to express our religion. Leave the expression of religion on the part of our children alone. The teacher need not engage in our religion.

Recent decisions in the courts have allowed Bible study groups to use public classroom space. There have been cases, in Oregon and a few other states, where the Bible as Literature has been taught in public schools by public school teachers. There is widening recognition that religion has its place and we have the right to express it.

Pat and Dan Hagmann
Farmington Hills

Mercy's right

Having made the choice as an adult to become a Catholic I find the actions of Ms. Miller and her followers to be an example of just how far some members of the church are out of touch with today's world.

First of all the administration of Mercy High School finally made the right decision and allowed the governor's offer of lunch to remain an auction item.

Second, for anyone to even consider that a Catholic elected to public office should try to force the doctrine of the Catholic Church on all citizens is clearly out of touch with the world today. People are elected to enforce the rules of the state or city they serve and not of the church they belong to. Like it or not, abortion is the law of the land and until that law is changed elected officials are bound to obey and enforce that law.

For Miller to state that her organization is not political is a bit of a joke. They have been actively making fools of themselves for months by picketing, protesting and obstructing the lives of people not involved. To be pleased that some have made the decision not to send their daughters to Mercy is sad.

On the other hand, I would be willing to believe that others have made the decision to send their daughters there because Mercy finally stood up to a group of radicals and made the right decision.

Richard D. Isham
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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QUOTABLE

"There's weapons of mass destruction and weapons of mass disruption. It has to do with our perception."

— Farmington Public Safety Director Gary Goss

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