

Opinion

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Out of bounds State proposal goes too far

IT'S OUR BALL, so you'll play our way — or not at all. That's what state athletic directors seem to be telling our student athletes. Well, parents might be tempted to remind the state just who's paying for that ball nowadays.

A statewide organization of ADs recently decided that, in the best interest of student athletes, a rule should be handed down from on high limiting the number of club or non-school teams on which a student athlete may compete.

The Michigan High School Athletic Association has been polling school boards around the state to see what the local trustees think about this issue. The Farmington Board of Education will discuss it in March.

We urge the Farmington board to make its thoughts very clear: It's none of the state's business.

There are always good reasons for discussing proposed rules. And after all is said and done, most would agree that as many issues as possible should be decided at the local level.

IN THE CASE of deciding whether a student should be limited to playing only school sports (and not participating in recreation-type after-school leagues), that decision should rest with the student and parent.

Apparently the majority of athletic directors polled by the statewide organization are concerned that high school athletes are becoming too specialized.

Soccer in particular is becoming more and more popular, and athletes are using after-school and summer programs to hone their skills. Athletic directors have noticed that these programs are sometimes "stealing" players from high school sports.

For example, a prep soccer player might have joined the track team after the soccer season in the old days. Now, that same player might decide to join a traveling soccer club after school instead of moving on to another high school sport.

Some ADs claim that this type of sport specialization defeats the purpose of a well-rounded educational/athletic experience.

WE CAN'T AGREE with this thinking. The ADs are correct when they say school sports must not be used as practice vehicles for college competition. High school teams should remain open to as many students as possible to promote fitness, teamwork and the basic skills of hard work and dedication to goals.

If the club leagues are sapping athletes from some high school sports and raising the level of play on others, that may be the price paid for popularity. It may also require schools to look beyond the varsity sports level to offer more intramural and club-level sports.

But prohibiting an athlete from pursuing after-school leagues goes beyond the boundaries of legitimate regulation. The student and parent should decide the best use of the young athlete's time.

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One more thing: It isn't lost on us that the ad hoc committee of the MHSAA, people who discussed this issue, came from places like Spring Lake, Leland, Portage, Eric, Haslett and Ontonagon.

We understand how the prevalence of club sports might be a real concern to high school coaches and ADs in the small towns of outstate Michigan. If too many kids decide to play club soccer, there might not be enough left to make a track team.

But this is southeast Michigan, metropolitan Detroit, with big school districts and lots of youngsters, enough to stock both varsity and club teams.

We hope the athletic directors see the light — once the parents and students help turn it on. High school sports do have some problems, but this state proposal creates even larger ones.



Population loss to hurt Dems in redistricting

IT DIDN'T TAKE long for the fur to fly after both parties submitted their competing congressional redistricting plans.

"You may pick the word to describe the Republican plan. The word could be outrageous, egregious, ruthless, overreaching, self-serving or myopic. All are correct," said John Dingell, the Democratic dean of the Michigan delegation.

"It's obviously not intended to be of assistance to the Democrats," said an unnamed Michigan GOP source.

"The Republicans act as if they believe they have the federal court in their pocket. ... Their plan would destroy one of the most powerful congressional delegations among the states," according to Gary Corbin, Michigan Democratic chair.

Bill Ballinger, former Republican state senator and now editor of "Inside Michigan Politics," believes that the GOP plan will at a minimum force Democrats to absorb the loss of both seats in Congress, that Michigan's relative population loss requires.

WHAT'S REALLY going on? In part, it's just politics as usual. Michigan's quota of seats in Congress slips from 18 to 16, a result of population losses in the 1990 census. And both parties have submitted competing plans to redistrict the state to a panel of three federal judges. Two of them are Republican

appointees and one is Democratic. Although the judges aren't talking, guess which plan looks like it will be approved?

In part, Republicans claim, it's just payback for nearly 20 years of Democratic domination of the Michigan delegation. And, Republicans add, in part it's merely a reflection of the fact that Republican-leaning areas of Michigan have grown in the last 10 years while Democratic-leaning areas have not.

BUT THERE is more to it than that. It is hardly sheer coincidence, if the GOP plan is accepted, that:

• Democratic Rep. Sander Levin (who holds a powerful seat on the powerful Ways and Means Committee) would have to run in a primary against Democratic Rep. Dennis Hertel (who is chair of the Merchant Marine subcommittee with jurisdiction over the Great Lakes).

• Flint's Democratic Rep. Dale Kildee (who is Michigan's only member of the House Budget Committee, where he chairs a subcommittee) would face in a primary Saginaw's Bob Traxler (who chairs the Appropriations subcommittee on Housing and Urban Development, Veterans Administration and independent agencies).

• Chances for re-election for Democratic representatives Howard Wolpe and Robert Carr would be jeopardized. Wolpe chairs a subcom-



mittee of the Science, Space and Technology Committee and Carr sits on the Appropriations Committee.

MOST OBSERVERS agree that while redistricting plans are inherently political, the Democratic proposal was relatively moderate while the GOP plan went for a partisan home run.

"Roll Call," the widely respected and independent newspaper circulated on Capitol Hill, last week ran a big story on the Michigan redistricting fight. The headline read: "Outrageous" GOP Remap Targets Michigan Powers."

The article remarks that the Michigan delegation has "truly extraordinary power" on Capitol Hill and concludes that if the Republican plan is accepted, "it will be a long time before Michigan's Democrats ever again wield the clout on the Hill they currently possess."

But I'm afraid that's just politics. Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. His award-winning column will appear periodically.

Heart smart Here's a taste test of region

TOMORROW'S VALENTINE'S Day. So it's only fitting we take the time to send an editorial bouquet to those whose actions are helping make our communities, our region — heck, even our world — a better place.

Thought we'd stop there? Of course not, we're newspaper people. We're paid to be objective. Besides, all that sentiment raises our blood sugar to potentially dangerous levels.

So, to balance things out, we've included more than a few darts in with our Valentine hearts.

Cupid, draw back your bow:

• A heart to all those like Livonia Churchill high school student Jennifer Swartout who are urging people — especially young people — to wake up to the reality of AIDS.

• A heart to all those at least willing to give American-made cars a chance and to all those struggling to make the Made in the U.S.A. label mean something once again.

• A heart to those governmental bodies that cable cast their meetings. Farmington Schools, better-late-than-never, is among the latest to join the list. Sometimes they are as enlightening as the Discovery Channel; others as low down as professional wrestling, but always worth a look.

• A HEART to plans to ban smoking at Tiger Stadium (and to Tigers management for preventing home run king Cecil Fielder from skipping town.)

• While we're still on the sporting page, a heart to the Detroit Lions and coach Wayne Fontes for their spirit, fire and determination in the emotional, heart-tugging 1991 season.

• A heart to the Michigan GOP for opening its presidential preference primary. All these people who want to vote, but can't bring themselves to be called a Democrat or Republican in public should give party leaders pause. (Maybe the answer lies in our darts column.)

• A heart to Michigan Gov. John Engler for, for . . . give us a minute here. Oh yeah, for making Michelle Engler our state's first lady. We know a winner when we see one.

• A heart to native son Tim Allen for setting his hit television show "Home Improvement" in a Detroit suburb. (Free plug: It's on ABC, 8:30 p.m.

Tuesdays.) OK, so you all think it's Birmingham. We still say it's Canton.

Now, for the other side.

• A dart to those who still consider AIDS a disease that only affects "those people." Wake up, when it comes to AIDS awareness, we're all in this together.

• A dart to those who are using pro-U.S. sentiment for cheap politicizing (A fine judge like Hilda Gage sentencing someone to drive an American car, what gives?) or, worse, as an excuse for racist actions.

• A dart to government officials who hold secret meetings, still avoiding the Open Meetings Act after all this time and still trying to conduct their business in the dark. How about a dart for cable companies, too. Their price increases have been outrunning inflation the way the Road Runner outruns Wyle E. Coyote.

• A dart goes to almost everything coming out of the Tigers camp in the past 12 months. Bo's Tiger Stadium strategy, Ernie's firing — 'nuff said.

• PLANS to raise next year's ticket prices earn Lions management a big, fat dart, though. Hey, there were years when you couldn't have paid us to watch the Lions play.

• A dart to Dems for keeping their presidential primary closed. A big, fat dart goes to both parties for bringing us a passel of candidates so mediocre it makes it difficult to vote for anybody.

• A dart to the gov for — among other things — failing to seize a golden opportunity to raise the state gas tax. Squeezing out fraud only gets you so far. Besides, our roads badly need repair. If we weren't nice people, we'd suggest chaining him to the back of his Oldsmobile and running him up and down Plymouth Road a couple of times. But we are nice people. So we won't.

• A dart to all those other shows that get cheap laughs at Detroit's expense. Enough, we say. Come to Detroit and we'll show you how nice we are. We'll show you how much our region has to offer. We'll show you just how nice a time you can have here. And if you still make fun of us, we'll chain you to the back of our Oldsmobile.

from our readers

Talk to kids about alcohol

To the editor:

Talk with your kids about alcohol before someone else does.

There is a new program to teach you how — Talking With Your Kids About Alcohol (TWYKAA).

Having recently completed the TWYKAA course, I am grateful to Pat Newcombe of Farmington Families in Action for bringing this nationally recognized program to our community.

We have concrete guidelines for avoiding heart disease — exercise at least three days a week, don't smoke, eat a low fat diet, etc. But consider the guidelines we have for avoiding alcohol-related problems: "Moderation is the key" or "Know when to say when."

What does that mean? Such guidelines are wide open to interpretation and offer little help.

TWYKAA presents well-researched information on how to estimate individual risk for developing a problem with alcohol and how to choose concrete, low-risk options for individual drinking behavior.

Best of all, the course teaches parents how to relate this information as well as their own values about drinking to their kids, no matter what values they hold.

Before TWYKAA, I had a little idea what to say to my teens on the subject, but now I feel confident in discussing drinking with them and in saying the right thing without turning

them off. The course took 10 hours over four weeks, but it was one of the best 10 hours I have ever spent. TWYKAA takes time, but it does not waste time. The cost is \$10 for the written materials.

I strongly recommend this program to anyone concerned about the pressures facing our teenagers today. For more information, contact Pat Newcombe at Farmington Families in Action, 473-8576.

Linda Eoberg,
Farmington

FHS show was great

To the editor:

Bravo to the students and teachers at Farmington High School for their recent performance of "The Music Man."

It was an outstanding experience for everyone involved and was evidence of the strong vocal and instrumental music programs in the Farmington Schools.

A special thanks to Richard Swan, Richard Burgess, Jan Drachel, Norman Logan and Lucy Kovak. The set design by Don Keys and Michael Todorov was absolutely professional.

This play was a fine example of how the arts enrich our lives and give everyone involved the great feeling of accomplishment that comes with excellence.

And to the Barbershop Quartet: I'm still humming "Lida Rose, I'm

home again Rose. . . ." Thanks guys. Bruce and Kathy Hall, Northville

Keep those cards coming

To the editor:

I, readers of the Farmington Observer. My name is Levi Jarrell. I'm a fifth-grade student at Clayton Elementary School in Englewood, Colo.

Our class is studying geography and history of the United States. We would appreciate it if you would send us a postcard from your state so we can learn more about our country.

The address is: Clayton Elementary School, 4600 S. Fox Street, Englewood, Colo 80110.

Thank you for your help. Levi Jarrell, Englewood, Colo.

Opinions are to be shared

We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity.

Letters should be mailed to: the editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

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