

Losers take note

We salute you; try again

Seems like we're always limbering up the old vocal cords to sing this tune about this time of the year, but anyway... Here's to the losers, to those who still believe.

The line from the old Frank Sinatra song comes to mind as we consider (through eyes still bleary) the recent general election and some good folks who weren't belting down the bubbly or otherwise whooping it up after all the votes had been counted on the night of Nov. 3 and the morning of Nov. 4.

Hey, Jack, Bob, Ken and Al, and all you other also-rans, you're nothing but a bunch of losers, but we enjoyed covering you and your campaigns just the same.

For the most part, you conducted those campaigns with dignity and respect for your opponents and the political process itself. Even that red-hot judicial race — which featured some controversial cable TV ads by one candidate and a lawsuit by the other — wasn't too bad.

Magistrate Maria Parker, who wore a judicial robe in the TV commercials, and opponent Jack McDonald, who went to court in an attempt to stop the ads, provided a little spice in an otherwise drab and predictable local election.

If that's as down-and-dirty as it gets in local politics, then Farmington-area folks must be well-served. It's just too bad that someone had

to lose that battle for a seat on the bench of the 47th District Court.

Take heart, you losers. In many cases, we liked your ideas and the way you presented them. We hope you'll try again. We hope to see your campaign signs alongside our roads before some future election.

In many cases, we couldn't endorse you, but it had nothing to do with your ideas, really. It was just that your foes were better, more experienced, more knowledgeable about the districts and their problems.

That's the way it looks to us at this time, anyway. Of course, we may be proved wrong in time.

And while we're still thinking about the election, let's credit the folks who work in the Farmington Hills City Clerk's office. Nothing was going their way election night.

In the face of a near-record turnout and the usual election snafus, a machine broke down. A replacement was hauled in from Ann Arbor. It broke down. Another was brought from Oak Park. They were still counting absentee ballots at 8:15 the next morning.

Despite everything, Sue Rose, assistant clerk, had a smile and pleasant word for everyone election night. She's one of many reasons why it's fun to cover elections in this community.

Release state House as hostage



Barring some unforeseen circumstances — like recount, or recall — it looks like the state House of Representatives is going to be split right down the middle with 55 seats for the Democrats, 55 for the Republicans.

Already the arm-twisting has begun as each party looks for a defector so it can claim itself the majority party.

Already some politicians and pundits are decrying the split as another example of that new political catch word: gridlock.

But we need to dispense with terms like defector and gridlock that predict continued inaction for our state Legislature. Compromise is the watchword that ought to be emphasized.

Simple as it sounds, it reflects the difference between moaning about a problem and suggesting a solution.

Maybe compromise is just a pipe dream. If our representatives are unable to choose a speaker, compromise on legislation is unlikely.

However, the carrot stick of compromise is worth the effort. A morass of partisanship is continually dumping complex and controversial issues into voters' laps via ballot initiatives.

The old Democratic-dominated state House wasn't proficient at getting things done. And the prospect of a Republican-dominated House increases the likelihood Gov. John Engler will

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run roughshod over state programs.

Partisanship has held our state government hostage too long.

Committee chairmen and chairwomen, committee assignments and office space could all be assigned by compromise.

There could be a compromise on property taxes — one that reduces tax burdens without bankrupting school districts.

That should be followed by a compromise on auto insurance rates — one that reduces rates for consumers while still leaving them with reasonable coverage in case of catastrophic injuries.

The Legislature could even come up with a way to trim state programs without adversely affecting the people the programs serve.

Regardless of the power play, our representatives should consider what compromise could mean — for Michigan and all their constituents.

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

Some don't vote

On Nov. 3, I was one of the record-breaking multitude who waited the more than 1½ hours for the privilege of casting my ballot in support of the democratic process.

The unfortunate reality was that the system was not prepared to accommodate me or the thousands of others just like me in the Detroit-Metropolitan area.

Additionally, many would-be voters would not or could not accept the penalty associated with this type of delay and simply left, the result being that they were effectively denied their inalienable right to vote.

Many more people, some for the first time, and now unfortunately, some for the last time, will refuse to again suffer this unfortunate and unnecessary stagnation of human resources.

They will forge their own solution to this bureaucratic malaise by not voting in the future.

If boards of directors and corporate management have a fiduciary responsibility to their shareholders, then certainly the government employees responsible for establishing the vote recording process have at least a moral, if not legal, responsibility to afford every voter the

right to cast his or her ballot in a convenient and timely manner.

The obvious abdication of this responsibility will, in all probability, lead to the pious encantations of all good bureaucrats when in the next election their shrill voices will be raised in condemnation of all of those who did not vote.

And when they raise their petulant little voices in whining challenge as to why only 25 percent of Americans vote, let's all who tried so hard to raise that average remember to remind them that it was because they wouldn't allow us to.

Who knows — maybe that was the plan all along
J.R. "Jim" Zurak, Farmington Hills

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. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number. Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 21898 Farmington Road, Farmington 48336.

House control is heavy matter

The Emperor Nero, legend goes, fiddled while Rome burned.

Equally self-absorbed, Gov. Engler and the entire state House of Representatives, Democrats and Republicans, are sawing away while Michigan's economy is in flames.

Last week's elections left membership in the House at (you pick): 55-54 Republican, 56-54 Democratic or a 55-55 tie. So Lansing, always abhorring a power vacuum, is convulsed about which party will wind up with the House majority.

It's easy to laugh about it, but to legislators it's serious business. Whoever party runs the House gets to pick the committee chairs, control the agenda of bills up for consideration, and select the majority staff. This is the heavy stuff of politics.

For Republicans, it's a dream come true: Adding control of the House to the Senate and the governorship puts them in charge of Michigan's political process. For Democrats, it's the last gasp of a party that got bushwhacked in Michigan on the way to winning the presidency.

The weapon of preference in this battle is simple bribery. You bribe one or two members of the opposition to switch (or even abstain) on the election of the House speaker, and you win the game. Big.

The stakes are high. One story as of last Friday was that Republicans had offered to make almost anyone who would vote their way chair of the powerful Appropriations Committee.

While we mere citizens watch these insider



PHILIP POWER

games unfold, Michigan's economy is burning. Consider:

■ General Motors at last has figured out that the overhead required to control 50 percent of the U.S. auto market is a bit larger than its current 30 percent share warrants. Motor vehicle employment in Michigan has already declined from a peak of more than 400,000 to around 280,000. Don't hold your breath waiting for auto employment to move up.

■ So it's no surprise that nearly 900,000 people moved out of Michigan over the past 20 years. That's nearly 10 percent of the total population, probably the most mobile and the most employable.

■ Many who are left behind are concentrated in Detroit, where the schools are immobilized by the defeat of the school board reformers, and the relative percentage of people on welfare tops the nation.

Personally, I hope they get the fight over control in Lansing settled as soon as possible. We've got some heavy lifting to do about our economy, and the sooner the folks in the capital finish their power struggles, the sooner they can get it.

Phil Power is chairman of the company that owns this newspaper. To leave a voice mail message for Phil Power, dial 953-2047 mail box 1880.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

What do you expect from your new president?

We asked this question at the Crossroads A&W in Farmington.



"Better health and medical policies. And I expect him to keep his promises."
Don Laurinaitis
Farmington



"I guess a big change... new jobs."
Ben Watson
Farmington



"That he doesn't turn gay... unless he falls in love with me."
Jim Stryker
Northville



"Absolutely nothing. I don't think much of him."
Michelle Griffith
Livonia

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