

Silly season?

Keep campaigns above board

Ah, yes, someone should write a song — election time and the rhetoric is sleazy — something like that, with apologies to Mr. Gershwin.

Summer is upon us and so is the political season. Sometimes that season gets silly. Already signs are sprouting from manicured front lawns and weed-choked vacant lots. And already there've been complaints from candidates about said signs being yanked from some of those locations.

Actually, the political season started early in the Farmington area this year with the recent State Senate election ordered by Gov. Engler.

But now it's really in full swing with eight candidates running hard — in two important local races — state representative in the 37th District (Farmington and Farmington Hills, Jan Dolan's bulldozing for so many years) and a seat on the Hills City Council.

Farmington-area voters will have some tough choices to make when they go to the polls in the Aug. 6 primary that will narrow the field in the Republican and Democratic races — for state representative.

There are four Republicans (actually, we were expecting even more in this rock-ribbed Republican land) and (will wonders never cease?) two Democrats, who actually seem to be taking the process seriously.

Farmington Hills voters will select from a field of two a council member to fill a vacancy created last year when the city began direct election of its mayors.

We know the people running for the council spot and the state office — and we're sure we're going to get to know them a whole lot better as the campaigns roll along.

We think they're all decent people, but, hey, some folks become children during election campaigns. We've seen it in past elections. Will we see it in this one? Well, what is your guess?

For one thing, certain candidates (you know who you are) are far too concerned about what is (or isn't) included about them in the local newspaper. Those people never seem to realize that it's the voters they have to win over, not the reporters and editor on some newspaper.

Hopefuls who gripe about newspaper content and coverage are usually the ones who get the "unsuccessful candidate" designation in post-election stories.

To sum up, candidates who expect to be taken seriously by the voters and the press should show a commitment to the voters and the community, not to their own egos.

So candidates and sidekicks, please stick to the issues and forget about:

- Yanking each other's signs out of lawns and lots.
- Placing spies in each other's camps.
- Starting whispering campaigns about each other.
- Pitting one supporter against another in various divide-and-conquer schemes.
- All other childish things we've seen so many politicians do over the years.

Issues define prosecutor race

Even if incumbent Richard Thompson fends off challenger David Gorceya in the Republican primary for Oakland County prosecutor on Aug. 6, he'll barely have time to celebrate. In the Nov. 5 general election, he'd face Democrat Steven Kaplan who, without much countywide recognition, came within 42,000 votes of unseating the incumbent four years ago.

A Royal Oak city commissioner and Birmingham Farms-based attorney, Gorceya is a former Oakland County assistant prosecutor who's a formidable opponent with considerable GOP support.

A Macomb County assistant prosecutor who lives in West Bloomfield, Kaplan is a former Southfield school board president with plenty of cash contributions from the Democratic Party.

Thompson cites a 98-percent conviction rate and creation of specialized units to fight child sexual assault, domestic violence, auto theft, parole appeal and narcotics.

He won the first Oakland County Child Abuse and Neglect Council Child Advocacy Award. And he successfully defended the state's mandatory life-in-prison law for major drug dealers.

So why is he in the political fight of his life after two high-profile terms as prosecutor?

It's in large part to his relentless — and failed — prosecution of West Bloomfield resident Jack Kevorkian, the assisted-suicide crusader.

But it's also because of a daunting personality that has alienated him from many party operatives as well as district and circuit judges, county commissioners and assistant prosecutors.

His embrace of the Birmingham-based Michigan Christian Coalition has irked more moderate Republicans.

Thompson's common-law prosecution of Kevorkian and failed corruption probe into the

Oakland County Sheriff's Department helped drive his former boss, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson, from endorsing his re-election bid. Thompson was chief assistant prosecutor under Patterson from 1972 to 1988.

The issues are substantial in this year's race for chief prosecuting attorney.

Beyond headline grabbers like assisted suicide and sheriff's department corruption, they include: conviction rate, plea bargaining, gang violence, drug trafficking, homicide investigations, young offenders, crime prevention, domestic violence and staff management.

The differences between Thompson and Gorceya are striking.

Thompson says he has the toughest "no plea bargain" policy in the nation. Gorceya says plea bargaining should be decided case by case.

Thompson says Oakland County has the highest conviction rate in the nation — 98 percent. Gorceya says that figure is closer to 51 percent.

Thompson says he has returned \$2 million to the county coffers during his tenure. Gorceya says Thompson has wasted \$1 million in failed policies.

Thompson says assistant prosecutors routinely leave for higher-paying jobs in the private sector after gaining valuable trial experience. Gorceya suggested too many leave because of disputes over Thompson's hard-line management policies.

For the first time in years, Oakland County voters will have a clear-cut choice for prosecutor in not only the Republican primary but also the general election.

That's an invigorating prospect, given the immense power the Oakland County prosecutor wields in the administration of justice.

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:

How can parents make sure their kids have a fun summer?



We asked this question at the Special Services summer program.

Camp, music lessons and swimming at the local pool.

Gail Booker
Farmington Hills



We sign up for every activity we can — summer camp, swimming and a trip to northern Michigan.

Eva Fleisher
Farmington Hills



Trying to do different outdoor activities. Keep her with kids her own age.

Bob Hagle
Farmington Hills



Today, there are a lot of options for parents. I think this city has a lot to offer.

Kim Gottsaman
Camp Weewonna

Letters to the Editor

No Thompson fan

It seems it's time for the voters of this county to put Prosecutor Richard Thompson out of office.

Without even bothering to address the question of whether Kevorkian was right, wrong or criminal, after three of Mr. Thompson's failures to convict, and three expensive tax-paid trials, it appears he either had three poor cases to begin with which never should have gone to trial, or he prosecuted them all poorly.

Whatever the case, he cost the taxpayers a great deal of money for no visible return.

Beatrice F. Keeber,
Farmington Hills

They're for Cathy

We have been most fortunate in our district to have had dedicated individuals representing us in Lansing.

As Jan Dolan moves on, we need to continue this excellent representation and select a leader who will listen and be responsive to the needs of the people. That person is Cathleen Webb.

Cathy is a proven leader and is a person totally committed to new challenges. We have known Cathy for many years and have worked with her on community projects. She can and will use wise judgment in the decision making process.

John and Shirley Richardson,
Farmington

Just carry a gun

Rather than carrying gas and all your equipment to your clients, Dr. Kevorkian, why don't you just carry a gun? You hold the gun and they pull the trigger. Both your equipment and gun serves the same purpose (relieves pain by way of death).

You wish all doctors to be licensed to kill as well as to promote good health. What title would you suggest for them? They would be then, more or less a doctor as we now know them. How could we then be sure they would not give us the wrong pill when in a hospital especially?

If you are sincere in relieving pain for your clients why don't you make a study in depth how to do just that or, suggest to your clients a different doctor or, to contact Hospice. They have a good record of relieving pain.

If a certain man coached a second man how to rob a bank, the coach drove the car and the other picked up the money, both would be guilty. What is the difference between what you are doing and the coach? Both of you had a part.

I remember years ago a 14 year old boy committed suicide. People have been doing it without your so-called kindness for years.

Why is there any need for men like you? Oh, so they could die with dignity? No man on the face of this earth can make wrong right, and right wrong. When it is yes, let it be yes, and when it is nay, let it be nay.

Leslie E. Swanson,
Farmington

On good phonics

Would a school system spend more than \$700,000 for a new phonetic reading program if its old whole-language program were working?

No. It would be wasteful to spend such a large sum of money based on a whim.

The time, money, and effort needed to retrain teachers only makes sense if it is absolutely known that children learn to read and spell better by using systematic phonics and direct teaching methodology.

Once you realize that whole language never out-performs phonics, the decision to change to phonics is logical.

Livonia public schools decided to throw out their whole language reading program and purchase a new, recently published systematic phonics program. Good for them.

Selecting an established phonics program with a solid track record (such as Distar or Open Court) might have been a better choice. However, using any solid phonics program means the children in Livonia will all learn to read and spell accurately.

A good phonics program will pay for itself by eliminating the need to retain or remediate all of the non-readers.

Don't be surprised if the number of children labeled "learning disabled" plummeted. The number of LD students grew from 5 percent to almost 25 percent during the years phonics was eliminated from public schools. Too bad other school districts aren't as courageous as Livonia is to admit they were wrong when they embraced whole language and invented spelling.

And if Livonia has chosen Saxon math for their new math program, Livonia's school board will have made the best academic decisions for their elementary school children based on solid research.

Patricia A. Alspach,
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, 33411 Grand River, Farmington Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 810-477-9722.

MEMORY LANE

This week in history as reported in past editions of the Farmington Observer and the Farmington Enterprise.

■ 40 YEARS AGO — JUNE 21, 1956 (ENTERPRISE)

The Clarenceville School Board elected Fred Bailey president for the 1956-57 school year.

Bayard Tupper was the Farmington Board of Education's choice for board president for the next school year.

Bert Herzog was named president of the Farmington Exchange Club.

■ 10 YEARS AGO — JUNE 19, 1986 (OBSERVER)

Kelly Lynn Garver of Farmington Hills won the Miss Michigan title and the roses of victory in Muskegon. Garver, 23-year-old daughter of

Gerald and Arlene Garver, spoke confidently of winning the Miss Farmington title the previous July.

Hilda Watson recorded her 100th birthday at Baptist Manor in Farmington Hills.

Farmington Hills voters were to vote on a proposal that would provide a half mill for parks and recreation capital improvement.

■ 1 YEAR AGO — JUNE 19, 1995 (OBSERVER)

Farmington Hills firefighters closed a section of Power Road between 11 Mile and Alameda, after a gas leak was discovered.

A teenage girl told police she was sexually assaulted in a Farmington parking lot.

Farmington Observer

TOM BAER, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 810-477-8450
 TOM BYRD, PUBLISHER, 810-901-2537
 ROBERT SALLAS, MANAGING EDITOR, ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-901-2563
 MARY SCOTT, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, ECCENTRIC NEWSPAPERS, 810-901-2548
 STEVEN M. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER, 810-901-2595

SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION
 PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD JOHN REDDY, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL RONARD ANGLIN, PRESIDENT

OUR MISSION: "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Power