

Shared revenues

Mayors are on right road

Times have changed. Today, suburban leaders recognize the interdependence between suburbs and urban areas. That was proven again when south Oakland County mayors, including Farmington Mayor Mary Bush and Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi, hopped a bus Thursday morning for Lansing.

The mayors en masse hoped to make a case and a clear point in their unity, and their unity with the larger, urban cities, such as Pontiac and Detroit, for an equitable division of state shared revenues.

Cities, townships and villages receive money from state sales tax revenues on a per capita basis and they receive additional money based on relative tax effort.

A state Senate bill - SB 1181 - would give more money to growing suburban cities and townships. But the state House passed HB 6989, giving Detroit \$62.5 million each year for the next six years.

Suburban mayors obviously recognize the potential for a domino effect. If Pontiac and Detroit fail, so do the suburbs. We are all tied together as a regional economic, business, residential and cultural area.

Indeed the mayors' arrival in Lansing to oppose a couple state shared revenue bills is ironic. These bills would do much to boost suburban coffers. But they are destructive to urban areas. Detroit could lose as much as \$80 million, under one bill.

Meanwhile, the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Lansing Regional Chamber and the Michigan Chamber of Commerce, have all come out in support of older cities and the need to preserve their state-shared revenues.

■ The south Oakland mayors are wise to hop on a bus and make a case for urban areas. A look at our suburbs is not a glimpse of rural utopia. Southfield, Farmington and Farmington Hills, as well as Novi and Troy, are more urban than farmland.

Critics of state shared revenue complain that cities with big local tax efforts - such as Detroit - have been rewarded, saying it rewards high taxes and inefficient bureaucracy.

Critics of the state Senate plan complain that the plan allows continued migration into undeveloped areas - in other words, urban sprawl, leaving behind older infrastructures that could be better used.

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A plan that does not punish urban areas, such as Detroit and Pontiac, is a wise course for the Oakland mayors to pursue. It won't be long before these suburban cities will suffer from age, especially with infrastructure, and possible loss of residents and businesses to continued migration.

The domino effect is a real possibility as suburban Detroit ages. As Bush aptly put it: "So goes Detroit, so goes this whole area."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARKER

Bused: Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi accompanies Farmington Mayor Mary Bush and Novi Mayor Kathleen McLallen to Lansing to argue on behalf of larger cities.

We embrace our education

There's an ironic twist to an old quotation attributed to Mark Twain, America's foremost man of letters in the 19th Century.

"When I was a boy on the Mississippi River, there was a proposition in a township to discontinue public schools because they were too expensive. An old farmer spoke up and said if they stopped building the schools, they would not save anything because every time a school was closed, a jail had to be built."

The irony is that Michigan prison inmates are complaining about the discontinuity and lack of course offerings for those who want to earn high school diplomas or GED certificates.

The problem is immediate. The Michigan Legislature passed a law this year requiring every capable inmate seeking a parole to have a high school diploma or GED. Prison inmates know, sometimes better than us on the outside, that if you can't get the courses, you can't earn the diploma, and you can't get out and hold a job.

The thought strikes home as we observe American Education Week. Few nations in the world have lifted themselves up by their social, economic and political bootstraps through the education system as has the United States of America.

Once, American farmers were among the

least efficient in the world, earning subsistence livings. Under President Abraham Lincoln, the nation set up land grant colleges and agricultural extension services to make American farmers the most efficient in the world - and our people the best fed.

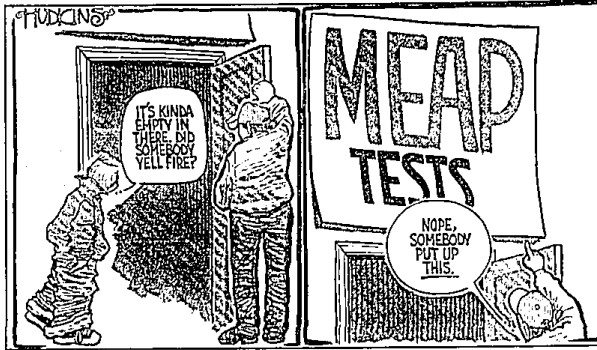
American states, beginning with Michigan in the 1830s, made a commitment to free public education. The states declared education to be a state interest, not just a frill.

If public education is a state interest, it isn't a monopoly. American states have refused to outlaw private schools, parochial schools and even "home schooling." Non-public schools are regulated with a very light hand.

Our system has deliberately targeted the brightest for college - and succeeded. If in the process we neglected job training for the rest, we have been in the process of making amends during the last 10 years.

If America is beautiful for amber waves of grain and fruited plains, it's also beautiful because it has educated its people, through idealism and taxes, in how to manage and preserve its natural assets. As the Michigan Constitution decrees, "schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

ARKIE HUDKINS



LETTERS

Stop the swearing

I am a sixth-grade student at East Middle School in Farmington Hills. I have a growing concern for the use of swearing in school by my peers.

It is not unusual for me to hear "Box o-" or "F--d" you as students pass from class to class, out of a teacher's hearing.

Although there are school rules prohibiting the use of swear words, some students think it's cool, or just don't care about the rules.

The use of swear words by 11, 12- and 13-year-olds is not necessary. It is a form of verbal abuse and harassment.

In my opinion, a good solution to this problem would be for the students to become more aware of the issue by taking charge and being responsible for their vocabulary. The students of all schools need to respect each other by eliminating all swearing.

Stephanie Weesle
Farmington Hills

Thanks for approval

We the cafeteria staff at Dunckel Middle School would like to thank you for passing the school millage and for Dunckel Middle School's wonderful new kitchen and serving lines. We have just moved in and we are constantly amazed and delighted with our new working space. A lot of people have worked very hard to make this possible for us, the Board of Education, our principal, Pam O'Malley, and nutrition services Supervisor Deb Larson. But it was you, the voters who made this whole process possible and we do want you to know that we appreciate everyone and everything.

Kathleen Bandero
Diane Hay
Sandy Rogala
cafeteria staff

Overwhelming injustice

Once in a while something happens and you know it would be wisdom to just keep out of it, but the overwhelming injustice won't let you remain silent. This is where I find myself now.

After giving this community and the people who live here 13 years of honest, dedicated and creative service Terry Sever deserves much better than he is getting. Let's review some history.

When it was decided to have an ice arena Terry used his car, his gasoline and time away from his business to travel to surrounding

states and try to become better informed about the ice arenas and their costs so we could get the best product for the best price. After presenting his information, the ice arena that had been an \$8 million project, became a \$6 million project.

We were about to renew a contract with Mercy Center or build a smaller facility without a pool for the senior citizen program when Terry pushed for buying Mercy Center. That center now serves many of our community needs.

Terry also promoted the Founders Sports Park and worked very hard to get ball fields in and available for the kids ahead of schedule. He helped to launch the Grand River corridor improvements and initiated the Woodland Hills property purchase.

When the Public Safety millage needed a boost Terry organized a door to door campaign that helped put it over the top resulting in more police officers on the street, a new fire station and more fireman and EMS available for all of us.

Recently when the Library millage was on the ballot, Terry was also on the ballot running for County Commissioner. He stopped working on his own campaign and worked several days for the Library millage to assure its passage. Terry was always there thinking, working and doing his very best for this city.

How with all that and much more that could be said do I think Terry Sever would all of a sudden do something that is not in the best interest of this community he loves? I don't think so, do you?

It is amusing to some people to think and say and write the worst about politicians, add to that the word developer and some people can get really in a frenzy.

Careful study of the facts will show Terry never did vote on any project of Phoenix Land Development after he became a consultant, that he did discuss his plans with the city attorney, who informed him he could do consultant work for a development even while on council, but could not vote on their projects, which he did not.

There was concern stated this could give a developer inside information. There is no inside information. All the requirements set forth by Council were made available to anyone who wanted to submit a project.

Perhaps given a chance to do it over Terry and Phoenix Land Development would do some things differently. Hindsight is a good teacher, but this rush to judgment and the assault on Terry's integrity and motives are unfair and undeserved.

Remember the old joke, if you are in politics and want a friend, buy a dog. Well, last week I did, so I'm covered. I hope Terry has one too.

Nancy Bates
Farmington Hills

Farmington Observer

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— Philip Power