

37th District race

Honest debate should rule

Former Farmington Hills Mayor Aldo Vagnozzi's announced intention to seek state Rep. Andrew Raczkowski's seat in November kicks off the election season, albeit a bit early. Nonetheless, it's almost a certainty Raczkowski will seek re-election to a third and last term as representative of the 37th District.

It's no secret that Vagnozzi, a Democrat, has been plenty angry about the home rule issue and no secret that Raczkowski, a Republican, has taken a licking over the same issue.

Before the campaign even starts though, we offer our words of caution. The electorate deserves a good, open and honest race. A good, open and honest debate between two formidable opponents.

As months draw closer to the heat of the race, we expect both candidates to be pounding the pavement, pushing their ideas, their experience and their stances on issues.

We look to this race as one packed full of issues. While home rule is important, this race is too important to swirl on one issue. We expect both candidates will keep the good of the Farmington and Farmington Hills area in mind, as well as the needs of the state.

We expect open and honest debate, and plenty of it. We urge both candidates to confront each other on issues, not with anger or

antagonism.

And we would like both candidates to disclose their contributions and expenses throughout the race — not just immediately prior or immediately after the election. It is important for voters to know who is financially supporting candidates and who isn't.

This race is important to the area. But voters honestly don't want to listen to picking or pettiness. There is an opportunity here for frank discussion of issues that plague both the area and the state. And we would like to hear each candidate's solutions for problems and concerns. It's not enough to just pick on each other's stances. Solutions, responses and a look into the future is what's needed.



Andrew Raczkowski



Aldo Vagnozzi

No place for one-upmanship

When legislators drafted HB 4777 in June 1999, they opened a Pandora's box filled with home rule issues that by all appearances will continue to plague both state legislators and local officials.

But word has it that the controversial House Bill 4777 has been sentenced to death in the Committee on Employment Relations, Training and Safety.

Its death, however, will not bring an end to the battle between the state and municipalities.

Yet another bill — affectionately known as the "son of House Bill 4777" — is waiting in the wings and will deal with specific state rule versus home rule issues, including minimum and living wages and the Occupational Safety and Health Act.

The Michigan Municipal League, which represents local municipalities, has offered its own response to the state Legislature. It seeks — with the backing of Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer — a petition drive to place the home rule issue on the November ballot.

Leaders of the petition effort, dubbed Let Local Votes Count, say they believe local government has the right to make its own laws and ordinances rather than apply statewide legislation enacted without regard for local needs or resources. The coalition's proposed ballot question would amend the constitution so a two-thirds majority in both the Senate and the House would be required to pass a bill that intervenes in municipal matters.

A Pandora's box, indeed, has been opened. Let Local Votes Count is nothing more than an angry reaction to the state's initiatives. What it calls for is vague and far too open to interpretation and dispute. It will solve nothing and its requirement that the state Legislature have a two-thirds majority will only serve to put a stranglehold on legislation that could be beneficial to communities.

The MML's petition attempt is a broad brush response that will create ineffective government and may, should voters get it on the ballot and approve it in November, create serious roadblocks for important legislation. It is as bad as HB 4777.

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As interpreted, HB 4777 irked plenty of local officials who saw the legislation as a vehicle to draw and quarter home rule. Yet legislators continued to defend the bill as a means of ensuring state's rights, not of detracting from local government's ability to govern its own municipalities.

State legislators, indeed, took a beating from local officials over the bill. And rightly so. The issues that prompted HB 4777, such as a smoking ban passed by elected officials in Marquette and living wage proposals in Detroit and Ypsilanti, were specific issues and concerns that should have been addressed as such. Instead they formed the bottom of what could have been a legislative endless pit targeting local government.

We are, however, cautiously optimistic that the offering of HB 4777 may help reduce the rubble, simply because it may — and we hope judiciously — address what sparked HB 4777. True representative and well-thought-out government must be more than a reaction to individual issues. Both the state Legislature and local municipalities would do well to recognize the need to work together for constituents and the future of the state.

One-upmanship has no place in government.



LETTERS

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, that's why we offer this space for your opinions. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity we ask that you provide a contact telephone number and if mailing or faxing a letter, please sign it. Letters can be mailed to: Joanne Maliszewski, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, MI 48335, faxed to Joanne at (734) 459-2700 or emailed to imaliszewski@cc.homecomm.net

Always grateful

I am one who often complains that the media focuses on the negative and rarely lifts up the positive. So this letter is in celebration of goodness and kindness and to express thanks to a neighbor whose name I don't even know.

My story begins with the "escape" of my dog. Since we have no fence, she is never allowed to run free unless she breaks her tether or pushes past someone as he or she opens the door. I had gone to answer the door thinking that Buttercup was safely shut in the family room. However, she had come through the kitchen into the living room and when I opened the storm door to take something from my friend, Buttercup saw an opportunity and seized it. (Buttercup is a bit of a misnomer now, for she is about 80 pounds. I assure you that the name was appropriate when she came to us at the age of six weeks).

Not the obedience school command of "come" or the promise of a treat or any of my other attempts to lure her to me were working, so I decided that the "wait and watch" approach was what I would have to do. What I didn't know was that she was terrorizing a neighbor and her children so that they didn't feel free to get from the house to their car. When they called the police, the police came to my door and asked if it were my dog. I said "Yes, but she won't come to me, and I'm here alone with my 21-month-old and 4-year-old grandsons."

I was panic stricken when they threatened to shoot her if I didn't do something. As soon as I had the assurance that the one officer would watch my grandsons, I ran out with a leash and a dog bone trying to get close to her. She, of course, thought that this chase was a wonderful game. As she dashed across 10 Mile, I followed her onto Elizabeth Court. A young woman there saw my struggle and offered to help. She brought out fresh lunch meat and eventually lured Buttercup onto her porch where we had her trapped. I snapped the leash on and hurried home to my grandsons and to relieve my officer baby-sitter.

The more I thought about the situation, I realized that without my neighbor's generosity I might still be running all over Farmington after my dog or, worse yet, I might not have a dog! It was such a wonderful affirma-

tion that in a world which is becoming more and more depersonalized, there are still those who are willing to "get involved" and who know what it is to be good neighbors. Thank you neighbor! I will always be grateful.

Carolyn Wik
Farmington Hills

A good laugh

I read with interest an article in a newsletter about a conversation a citizen of Hazel Park had with the mayor and several councilmen in the beer tent at a Memorial Day celebration.

The mayor posed the question, what can the city government do to make this resident happy? Without pause the resident replied that they ought to go through their ordinance book and repeal outdated, obtrusive laws. A councilman replied with, why bother if it doesn't affect this resident? The councilman then walked away. A few minutes later the resident walked over to the councilman and suggested that another councilman had a meeting to get to but may have had a beer too many. The councilman walked over to his colleague to offer him a ride whereupon the resident immediately made a citizen's arrest. It seems that Hazel Park still has a city ordinance outlawing the soliciting of rides.

They all had a good laugh over this but I think the point was made. Rather than continue to add to the burden of citizen compliance and city enforcement, why not remove unnecessary laws and regulations. Better yet, why not require a sunset clause on all legislation. This would force a review in say three-to-five years to see if the legislation is working. It would also give legislators campaign fodder. They could introduce and take credit for useful legislation and then get repeat mileage from its renewal/demise regardless of their support or opposition.

Let's start with the cities then move to Lansing and Washington.

Tom Glossop
Farmington

COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:
Next Tuesday is Michigan's Republican Party primary. If the election were held today, who would you vote for?



"Orin Hatch, I've heard some things about McCain."

Susan Zapinski
Detroit



"McCain. What I've seen, I like what he has to say better."

Judith Robert
Farmington Hills



"Bush. I think he's better suited."

Leen Ryan
Farmington



"Bush. Really, between the two I wouldn't choose either."

Craig Laidel
Farmington Hills

We asked this question at the Farmington library.

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— Philip Power