

## OUR VIEWS

## Take time to learn about PACs during elections

Some call them "carpetbaggers."

They're organizations and people outside communities who sweep through town during elections and try to influence the outcome of a political race. Thus far, the greatest attention has been paid to the House District 37 race, which by all accounts is going to be a barn burner.

According to their campaign finance statements, survivors from the August primary - Democrat Aldo Vagnozzi and Republican Valerie Knol - have both taken funds from Political Action Committees. We remember a time a few years ago when Vagnozzi tried to get incumbent Andrew Raczowski into an agreement that neither would take PAC dollars.

Vagnozzi has come a long way since then. This time around, the biggest chunk of PAC contributions came into his account. He received a total of \$5,800 from four organizations: UAW Michigan V-8, UPCW Local 951, Detroit Federation of Teachers and Michigan Petroleum Jobbers.

The Great Lakes Education Project spent nearly \$3,000 on a campaign brochure that endorsed the candidacy of Vagnozzi's opponent, Valerie Knol. Additionally, GLEP's financial disclosure also indicates a \$1,000 contribution to Knol's campaign.

These organizations are powerful, and they attempt to push their narrow agendas by helping to elect lawmakers who agree with them. They'll do that by convincing the communities all across the state to endorse and financially support whichever candidate most strongly aligns with their positions.

Political action committees are perfectly legal tools that allow large groups of people to support a cause or candidate as a unified bloc. We're not saying they have no place here, but voters should make themselves aware of the influence they have in local elections.

Between now and November, organizations most of us have never heard of will be mailing brochures endorsing one candidate or another. We urge voters to take the time to learn what these organizations believe and why they're endorsing a particular candidate.

Visit the Secretary of State's Michigan Elections Web site, <http://mel.org/government/CIVIL-elections.html>, to learn more about the wisdom of footing the bill for our local elections.

After all, knowledge is power.

## Informed electorate vital to democracy

Labor day is the traditional beginning of the general election campaign season.

For The Observer this is an important time of year. We believe that keeping our readers informed about candidates for public office is an vital part of what we do as a community newspaper. We also think it's essential to provide our readers with a forum to express their views on candidates and the critical issues they will face as elected officials. We invite our readers to actively participate in the election process by expressing their views.

We ask our readers to keep their letters to 400 words or less. We also ask them to write about the issues and why the candidate they support would be better to address those issues. We do not welcome scurrilous attacks, blatant misrepresentations and unsubstantiated information. We do not run form letters sent out in batches by special interests groups. The Observer reserves the right to edit letters for length and content and to reject letters that are potentially libelous, an invasion of privacy, a misrepresentation of fact or in poor taste.

In the week before the Nov. 5 election we will not run any letter that raises new issues. Letters that raise issues too close to an election do not give candidates and their supporters an adequate time to respond.

We make a special effort during the election campaign season to run as many letters as possible. In the past, we have run special Sunday opinion pages in addition to our regular Thursday opinion page to accommodate a flood of election letters and our endorsement editorials. We believe your letters are important and are a valuable contribution to the political dialogue.

In addition to covering the candidates and their campaigns, the Observer also contributes to that dialogue by offering our endorsements of candidates. We believe that as a news organization we have a special knowledge and insight because we regularly cover the candidates. We hold endorsement interviews of viable candidates so that the candidates can clarify their views by answering what we believe are pertinent questions and allowing candidates to raise their own issues.

We believe we provide just one of many perspectives on the candidates and the issues. We urge our readers to seek out other perspectives as well. We urge readers to attend candidate debates, forums and speeches; read the letters from other readers; evaluate campaign literature; invite candidates into your homes to discuss their views; and, most importantly, to cast your vote.

Democracy succeeds only when everyone participates.



BILL BRESLER | OBSERVER

Farmington's own boy band MB2, which includes Philip and Alexander Matz, Steven Kentzorski, Rachel Matz, Molly Faulterback, Samantha Solomon and Erin Moore, are demonstrating one of 40 assets generally present in healthy kids: Involvement in creative activities.

## LETTERS

### Improve packaging

Thank you again for writing about food allergies in "Family Fights for Better Labels." We so appreciate the community's support, especially now as the Food Allergen Consumer Protection Act is being reviewed by the Senate HELP (Health, Education, Labor and Pensions) Committee. We are supporters of the FACP, Food Anaphylaxis Education of Plymouth Mich., and the national Food Allergy Initiative.

Jacob's allergic to all tree nuts and peanuts. We scrutinize food labels, but food manufacturers are not required to list trace ingredients added during processing or in favoring. Also, alternative food names are used instead of common ones. Even when contacted directly, food manufacturers often can't provide us with precise information.

The Food Allergen Consumer Protection Act, HR 4704 and S 2499, would improve our lives significantly. Please visit [www.FoodAllergyInitiative.org](http://www.FoodAllergyInitiative.org) and click on "Labeling." When you click on "Show Your Concern," you will automatically send your support to all of your state representatives and senators in Washington, D.C.

You can also contact your senators and the HELP members at [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov)

Sharon, Marty and Jacob McEladdery  
Farmington Hills

### Best men for the job

Our Oakland County Commission will see an extraordinarily high turnover in its elected officials this November. Eleven of the 25 already will not be back for 2003.

With this loss of institutional knowledge it is important that we in Farmington and Farmington Hills take our two Commission seats seriously.

It is vital that we re-elect David Moffitt to his position. His functional knowledge of county government (he has served for over 15 years) will be indispensable given the many new faces that will be serving on the County Commission.

Our second seat has no incumbent candidate this year. We have a unique opportunity to promote a highly qualified man to the commission. That man is Michael Rogers. Mr. Rogers is an expert on road and infrastructure issues.

Furthermore, he presently serves on the Farmington Hills Planning Commission. He has a fundamental knowledge of how county and city governments operate. We will honor ourselves by voting him into office.

Everyone needs to pay attention to these races. It is important to look beyond mere partisan labels. I am encouraging everyone to vote for Moffitt and Rogers not simply because they are Republican, but because they're the best for the job.

Christopher M. Cummins  
Farmington Hills

### Let's Roll, Let's Roll

As we sift through the ashes of time, Memories live on forever so it seems. Memories of the old and new come to mind.

We cherish the thoughts of the good and bad. Remembering happy thoughts oft bury

the sad.

Actual living experiences overpowers a dream.

The terrorist armed had the plane in control. Sitting here I could see my destiny unfold.

No one has the right to pick my time to die. With no logical reasoning as to "How and Why"

Precious seconds raced by, I had no choice. Some others were waiting to hear my voice. Happily we talked of our love and our plight. A deep burning love for all determined this fight.

I jumped up charging, shouting "Let's Roll, Let's Roll!" Then the horrid, bloody fight began to unfold. The tragedy of death swept through all unbound.

As the ill-fated "Flight 93" slammed into the ground. What actually went on up there we surely won't know. Courage, nerves and guts forcefully took over the show.

If by chance these roles were reversed and we were there, Would we honestly made those moves in spite of despair?

The answer to this question rolls like the ocean's tide. "God's Love" and his "Plan" we must all surely abide.

Charles H. Cromer  
Farmington

### Childish namecalling

If I were Mr. Vagnozzi, I would not want the voting public to know my supporters were so childish as to get into a name-calling snit in the local newspaper. In re-reading the recent letter by Ms. Oliverio, you can almost imagine her stomping her feet and holding her breath as she attacks the integrity of Valerie Knol. She has no basis or facts to accuse Ms. Knol of being "unaccountable and unethical."

If Ms. Oliverio has no foundation for her attack other than partisan politics, then she should keep her opinions to herself. Valerie does bring integrity and honesty to the table, not to mention the energy to be an effective representative of the people of the Farmington area.

These personal attacks with no basis will be dealt with by the voters and they will cast their vote for Valerie Knol.

Bill Smith  
Farmington Hills

### Follow the Marines

"Millions for defense, but not one cent for tribute" made the seas safe for commerce and the United States a global power.

"Peace in our time" persuaded Hitler that Germany could win a war.

"Unconditional Surrender" concluded it. Diplomacy negotiated Korea and Vietnam into inconclusive disasters. "Land for peace" has brought Israel condemnation, casualties and a poor defen-

sive position.

Terrorists view compromise as weakness and become more aggressive. They respect only fearsome power and the will to use it. It is time for the State Department to follow the Marines-we were sending the wrong message again.

Hank Borgman  
Farmington

### Eleventh of September

From the Halls of Montezuma to the Shores of Tripoli,

We're the Home of the Courageous, the Country of the Free.

What joins us together unites to make us strong -

"With the help of friendly allies, we'll right this heinous wrong.

Terrorist marauders who struck our towers down,

Forget that the Big Apple's the whole free world's hometown.

If all this were not enough, you heaped your wrath upon

Our military headquarters, our mighty Pentagon!

The needless loss of human lives, children without folks,

Great sorrow, tears and heartbreak this tragedy evokes.

For even in these online days of high technology, Space flights, web sites, computer bytes, it's very plain to see,

That our President in Washington knows what we must do;

George W. and his cabinet will help to see us through.

Here's to our men on the hijacked plane who wrested control

Of the bomber bound for Washington with Beamer's cry "Let's Roll!"

Firefighters who risked their lives deserve a big hug too -

These heroes modestly proclaimed, "That's what rescuers do."

So rally 'round the flagpole, pledge allegiance, say a prayer,

When freedom needs defending - Americans are there!

And, dear Lord, may we not forget but help us to remember

To say a prayer for those who died the Eleventh of September.

ODEs

The Goodwill ODEmaker  
Farmington Hills

### SHARE YOUR OPINIONS

We welcome your letters to the editor. Please include your name, address and phone number for verification. We ask that your letters be 400 words or less. We may edit for clarity, space and content.

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### QUOTABLE

"In my mind, this further entrenches Akebono into the fabric of Farmington Hills."

Mayor Pro Tem Christopher McRae on the first step toward a tax abatement for the company

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Our fundamental purposes are to enhance the lives of our readers, nurture the hometowns we serve and contribute to the business success of our customers.