

OUR VIEWS

No apologies for diverse coverage

Last week on this page, we published a letter that begged to differ with our perceived emphasis on multicultural issues.

For the record, in this case perception is reality. What you see in our coverage of Farmington and Farmington Hills is a decided emphasis on diversity and the challenges it presents. Why? It's news.

It's news because children in our schools speak more than 80 different languages and dialects.

It's news because all across America, people have been under suspicion based on skin color, whether it's Driving While Black or Living While Arab.

It's news because, in the wise words of Farmington Board of Education President Linda Enberg, as far as we've come, we've still got a ways to go.

Diversity defines and enhances the Farmington/Farmington Hills area. Where else could you find Everest Express, a Nepalese restaurant, and a place called Brenda's Beans and Greens within a few miles of each other?

The fabric of our community includes so many different colored strands and to ignore them is to close our eyes to the beautiful tapestry they've created.

Does that mean we don't appreciate the contributions of white people? Of course not.

Conversations about diversity should never be about praising one at the expense of the other. Conversations about diversity should never involve a competition, because this isn't an issue of who's better and who's worse, who's right and who's wrong.

Everyone makes contributions, and the light shines equally on those who go above and beyond the call of duty in Farmington and Farmington Hills. The same holds true of our nation, on balance. It's easy to forget the civil rights movement began less than 50 years ago.

We have come a long way since then. But an equally long road lies ahead.

It's called the future. And it waits for no man, no matter what the color of his skin.

Cutting education funds isn't the answer

Local school systems got a jolt last week.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm announced that, unless the Legislature acts, she would cut school foundation grants by an average of \$86 per pupil for this year. The basic foundation grant is \$6,700 per pupil.

Granholm acted because of a shortfall of \$127 million in the state's \$12.7 billion school aid budget and a state law requiring a balanced school budget. The action followed announcements that foundation grants would be frozen for the next two school years.

The state Legislature has 30 days to act before Granholm's plan takes effect and the Democratic governor has said she is willing to work with the Republican-dominated Legislature to find some solution to the problem caused by the steep decline in tax revenues.

State Rep. John Stewart (R-Plymouth) called Granholm's move "posturing" in an effort to motivate the Legislature to delay planned reductions in the small business tax and the personal income tax.

"The economy is expected to begin its recovery this spring, which means tax receipts will start to grow," Stewart said. "If we put a pause on the reduction in the single business tax and personal income tax, we can come up with a balanced budget."

The foundation grant cuts will have a major impact on all of our school districts, which have already budgeted for the year based on expected state funding.

Wayne-Westland Supt. Greg Baracy, whose district could lose \$990,000 in state aid, was especially critical of the decision.

"It's only become a crisis for the school districts because the state is shifting its problem to us," Baracy said. "We honored our commitment to be prudent and turn districts around and they have to adopt a philosophy to honor their commitment to us."

Granholm has said that school districts could absorb cuts in state funding if they "tighten their belts." Many districts already find themselves strapped to begin with. Necessary programs and are beginning to assess the damage of cutting state funding in the middle of a school year.

It is now time for the governor and the Legislature to bite the bullet and delay the planned tax reductions and restore foundation grant funding. Our future is in our schools.

FARMINGTON Observer

Part of HomeTown Communications Network™

Jonli Hubard Community Editor	Todd Williams Director of Advertising
Hugh Gallagher Managing Editor	Peter Hall General Manager
Susan Rosiak Executive Editor	Dick Agnien President
Jeanne Towar V.P. Editorial	Phil Power Chairman of the Board

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.



BILL DRESLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Students from Gill and Wood Creek Elementary Schools sang together in perfect harmony during Sunday night's stirring Candle Light Walk ceremony, held to honor the memory of civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

LETTERS

What's going on?

What in the world is going on with the administration of the City of Farmington? The city manager Frank Lanthoff retires and the city council decides to waste God knows how much money on a "fill-in" manager?

What in the world is going on? For the few weeks that it will take the new manager to give notice to his former employer and move here in Farmington, we've got to have a temporary manager?

What do we have an assistant city manager for? What do we have department heads for? Are these people so incompetent that they can't hold it together for a few weeks? Is the city of Farmington so fragile that the city council and the mayor can't possibly oversee things for this short period of time?

Who authorizes the waste of money in hiring a "substitute" to hold down a desk in city hall? Are there any big decisions going to be made by this fill in person? No. Are there any union contracts in negotiation that a fill-in manager needs to approve? No. And there again, should he?

Come on Farmington residents, "rise-up" and voice your anger at this waste of our tax dollars. I told these people accountable. Mr. Richards, fill in for the job that you above all should know best. Let the other department heads do their jobs and we'll all be just fine.

Frank Lanthoff's leaving isn't the end of the world. Surely we can trust the department heads to "steer the ship" for this short period...if we can't maybe we should invite them to "retire" too.

Ralph Meyers
Farmington

Animal cruelty

Animal abuse is a crime punishable by law in all 50 states. Intentional cruelty to animals is generally not an isolated incident. Studies conducted during the last 25 years have substantiated the connection between violent behavior directed toward animals and violent crimes against humans and property.

The FBI began documenting the connection in the late 1970s by questioning convicted multiple murderers about their animal abuse histories. Almost half admitted to torturing and killing animals as adolescents.

A recent Massachusetts study tracked the criminal records of intentional animal abusers and compared them to a control group. It concluded that the people who intentionally abused animals were five times more likely to commit violent crimes against people, four times more likely to commit property crimes and three times more likely to have a record for drug or disorderly conduct offenses.

In another recent study, 71 percent of battered women in a shelter reported that their battering domestic partner had harmed or killed or threatened to harm or kill the family pet.

Intentional cruelty to animals is a serious crime and should be treated as aggressively as any other form of violence.

(This information was obtained from the Animal Legal Defense Fund, a national nonprofit organization of attorneys, law students, law professors and other legal professionals who work to ensure the enforcement of state and federal animal protection laws.)

George Sarkisian
Farmington Hills

Democrats ignore their own

Democrats were quick to condemn Trent Lott for his racist remarks at Strom Thurmond's birthday party, citing that his apologies were insufficient given his sordid past.

Moreover, Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) stated that if a Democratic leader made such remarks, they would similarly call for that person to step aside.

It was either a matter of convenience or forgetfulness for Democrats to ignore the March 4, 2001 comments by Sen. Robert Byrd (D-W. Va.) to Tony Snow on Fox News when he complained about "white niggers." This came from the same man who was an avid member of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1930s, referred to blacks as "race mongrels" in the 1940s, and spent 14 hours filibustering against the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Apparently, Mr. Byrd's written apology for his crass statements were sufficient to satisfy the NAACP, the Congressional Black Caucus, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton and other civil rights groups as none of them publicly condemned him. It's also interesting that Tom Daschle, Maxine Waters, Nancy Pelosi and others chose not to issue a single press release regarding his comments.

If Democrats are truly appalled by any racist or ethnic slur, then why have they ignored and/or forgiven Robert Byrd's comments?

Daniel G. Dublin
Farmington Hills

Dividend tax

The dividend tax cut has not been proposed to benefit the wealthy (the real taxpayers), but to restart the economy.

People planning for the future want a safe place for their savings and spare money. Industries that are hammered by trial lawyers and environmentalists are avoided.

Job-creating corporations cannot offer a good return because profits are taxed 35 percent, then the shareholder pays 25 percent tax on dividends. The government's take of 60 percent does not leave much incentive or capital for expansion. When investors don't find anything attractive the economy becomes stalled.

How much revenue would be collected if the government taxed 100 percent of all income over \$200,000? That question reportedly brought stupendous estimates, all of them false. No one would produce if everything were confiscated; the correct answer is zero. Revenue would be the same if no taxes were levied, but jobs and investments would skyrocket. Some taxes are needed, but soaking the rich to provide for the poor makes everyone poor.

Should President Bush offer private enterprise the incentive of allowing it to keep more of its own money and grow the economy, or stifle it with the politics of class envy? Do we prefer good salaries in a competitive marketplace, or good unemployment benefits in a welfare state?

A previous generation was asked, "What can you do for your country?" Does the current generation demand to know, "What can your country do for you?" Free enterprise can compete with anything except big government.

Capitalism made us prosperous - why did "profit" become an ugly word?

Incidentally, the death tax may take 55 percent of everything left, and that's another story.

Hank Borgman
Farmington

Brady says thanks

As I take the bench this week, I thought it an appropriate time to publicly thank my many friends and supporters and all those who voted for me in our recent judicial race.

It took a small army of people to build and erect commercial signs, distribute and pick up lawn signs, fold and stuff envelopes, "man" polling places and send "Neighbor-to-Neighbor" cards. A candidate must also have people and businesses who are receptive to the idea of visibly and publicly supporting a candidate by placing a sign in their yard or at their business. To each and every one of you I again say "Thank you!"

I must also thank all of you who showed your confidence in my campaign by casting your ballot for me. I have some big shoes to fill. Judge Fred Harris was a great judge who served our communities with honesty, integrity and intelligence. I can only promise to serve with the same ideals in mind and to listen to all who come before me and decide each case in a fair manner consistent with the law.

Finally, I would again like to thank my entire, and rather large, family; but most of all, my kids, Annie, Mary and Jimmy, and my wife, and best friend, Diane, for their love and understanding during the long campaign process. It was truly a team effort and we had a great team.

Jim Brady
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.

Mail:
Letters to the editor
Farmington Observer
3341 Grand River
Farmington, MI 48335

Fax:
(248) 477-9722

E-mail:
jhubred@oe.hometown.com

QUOTABLE

"No other facility in our society has access to parents of very young children like the library does."

- Farmington Community Library Executive Director Bev Papal