

OUR VIEWS

Don't default on duty to vote

When the call went out for school board candidates in Farmington and Farmington Hills this year, three people answered.

Karen Bolsen, John Goshorn and Cheryl Swaim have all shown up at every candidate forum. They've spent time listening to parents and talking to reporters. They've given voters an understanding of their positions, as well as clear choices in Tuesday's election.

Now it's up to voters to make those choices, and Monday's election is just as important as any other.

We believe candidate Cheryl Swaim has the right stuff. The Farmington Area Republican Club backs John Goshorn; others have written letters of support for Karen Bolsen. But saying "I'll support you" isn't enough.

Bed shift won't cure crisis

There's no doubt about the serious crisis in the Detroit health care system. But one proposal under consideration — allowing Detroit hospitals to build new beds at their facilities in the suburbs — is not the remedy.

The issue has caused an enormous stir in recent weeks.

Hospitals serving the city of Detroit — Detroit Medical Center, Henry Ford Health System and St. John Health System — are losing money largely because most of their patients are either covered by low reimbursement Medicaid or entirely uninsured. DMC recently precipitated the crisis by announcing \$300 million in losses over the past five years and threatening to lay off more than 1,000 staff and close units at Detroit Receiving and Hutzel hospitals.

The Detroit hospitals say in order to survive, they must improve their mix of patients, which is an elegant way of saying they want to move hospital beds to their suburban sites where patients have better-paying insurance plans.

Other hospitals, including systems like Beaumont and Trinity Health, as well as local independent hospitals such as Farmington's Boisford, are furiously lobbying against this idea. Allowing the Detroit outfits to move 300 hospital beds into their suburban markets would drain more than \$60 million from their annual revenue stream, they claim. Moreover, building 300 new beds represents an enormous capital investment, one that may not be needed in relatively well-served suburban communities.

All this comes to a head next week when the state's Certificate of Need Commission, whose job it is to decide what hospital facilities will get built and where, is set to rule on an esoteric provision of Public Act 619, passed in a lame-duck session of the Legislature last year. That provision would allow three health care systems — DMC, Henry Ford and St. John — to transfer hospital beds to their suburban sites without the state's OK.

We have no doubt that the Detroit hospitals are facing a genuine crisis, and allowing Receiving or Hutzel to close plainly would be a disaster. But allowing a piece-meal fix to a critical need in the entire health care system makes little sense. State leaders should be looking for a more comprehensive solution, which is the purpose behind the Certificate of Need process in the first place.

Other metropolitan areas around the country — Chicago and Denver, particularly — have faced similar health care problems in the past. Their solution has been to create a unified regional health care system that serves under-insured or uninsured patients in urban areas. In some cases, such systems are financed by a "tax" on hospitals throughout the state; in others, a regional levy on taxpayers has provided the funds.

One of the reasons Detroit hospitals want to be allowed to shift hospital beds to the suburbs just now is their calculation that neither the Legislature nor Gov. Granholm have the political will to consider a more comprehensive solution. They recognize the stopgap program under consideration is not a perfect solution, but they figure it's the only one that they can get through the political system.

This is silly. The only way to get lawmakers to take a wider view of health care is for the CON Commission to block the shift in beds, thereby forcing our political leaders to consider the future of health care in Michigan as a whole and over the long term.

The prospect of having more full-service hospitals operating in our suburban backyards may sound attractive. But it won't look so good if it penalizes existing hospitals, costs hundreds of millions of dollars in additional buildings and equipment and drives up health care expenses and health insurance premiums for us all.

Richard Agninan, president of HomeTown Communications Network Inc., parent company of the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*, is a trustee of William Beaumont Hospital. Susan Rosler, executive editor of the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*, is a member of the board of trustees of St. Mary Mercy Hospital in Livonia.



Businesses in the Village Mall in downtown Farmington got permission Monday to hang a banner sign announcing their 'First Fridays' promotion, which features later hours and entertainment. City officials here granted several sign variances, but plan to undertake a long-needed revision of the city's sign ordinance.

LETTERS

Step down

I was stunned to read the front page article in the Thursday, May 22, *Farmington Observer*, titled: "Board Member accuses PTA of playing favorites who called in questions about the PTA." The article states that at the PTA Forum for candidates for the Board of Education, board member Pam Christian accused the PTA Council of giving advance review of the questions to one of the candidates. Ms. Christian admitted that she had no proof for her accusation other than that she felt that candidate Cheryl Swaim was well prepared!

It is reprehensible and inexcusable for Ms. Christian as a board member to make such a reckless and prejudicial accusation. We do not tolerate such conduct in our schools and we will not tolerate it from our elected officials. An apology is not enough; Ms. Christian needs to resign from the School Board or be removed.

Mary Jean Lankas
Farmington Hills

Supports Bolsen

I am excited to see Karen Bolsen running for a position on the Farmington Board of Education. I've had a chance to work with her over the last 5 years on the Heritage Festival Planning Committee and I know she will bring many important qualities and skills to the Board position.

In a time when divisiveness and conflict are often the order of the day, Karen knows how to bring people of diverse backgrounds and experiences together. This is so important when you are working for the common good and it is no easy task. Karen Bolsen is the right person for the job!

I am equally impressed with her knowledge of the Farmington/Farmington Hills community. She understands and respects the needs of parents, educators, as well as the business community. She will put in countless hours to stay informed and to represent the interests of all citizens - from our youngest still enrolled in school to the seniors in our community.

I encourage the people of Farmington/Farmington Hills to join me in voting for Karen Bolsen for a position on the Board of Education.

David Hales
Farmington Hills

Appalled

After reading Sue Buck's account of the Farmington Board of Education Candidate forum on May 19, I'm appalled at board member Pam Christian's actions.

Her accusation that moderator Kim Heath provided phone-in questions to candidate Cheryl Swaim before the forum started is (as Ms. Christian acknowledged) unsubstantiated, and therefore, an embarrassment to the Board of Education.

The fact that the phone-in questions had been asked of the three candidates in the past make Ms. Christian's actions look like a desperate attempt to promote

her own candidate at the expense of the knowledgeable, well-prepared Ms. Swaim, and to discredit Ms. Heath. Her accusation also demonstrates why current Board of Education members should not endorse or campaign for Board candidates.

Since Ms. Christian chose to take her accusation directly to the press without warning or discussion with Ms. Heath and Ms. Swaim, I suggest she also make her apology in the *Observer*. To borrow a phrase from Ms. Christian, perhaps it would "feel good."

Patricia Brawlin
Farmington Hills

Bolsen Is concerned

I am writing this letter in support of Karen Bolsen for the school board position.

I have worked closely with Karen for years and have found her to be a professional, sensitive and energetic individual who is concerned about the quality of education in our public school system. She has extensive training and work experience in multiculturalism and diversity, a must quality in any community leader.

Karen will certainly promote greatly needed multicultural education and diversity training among not only students but also faculty and staff of Farmington Hills District school system.

Hesham Al-Tawil, Ph.D.
Farmington Hills

Lakefront response

While Joe Mantey may have many gifts, understanding the plight of lakefront property owners appears to not be one of them. I was a bit surprised that Joe wrote a 600-word guest column to simply refute one letter to the editor.

Perhaps the only way to respond in kind is to write an entire dissertation explaining where Joe is wrong, but that might be a bit much.

I am a property owner on Lake Michigan. When I talk about the Great Lakes, I know of what I speak. It's my desire that our residents pay attention to this ecosystem. Doing the right thing goes beyond partisanship, and it is unfortunate that Joe can't see past the minor fact that Aldo Vagnozzi and I belong to different political parties.

But Joe is not the issue here. Aldo is. When I see common sense legislation, I think it's quite reasonable to want my State Representative to vote in a common sense way.

(Joe) put forth that maybe Aldo voted the way he did because of possible conflicts with federal law. This sounds good, but I heard Aldo take a different approach on another issue at his open house regarding out-of-state trash.

When asked if it was a good idea to pass pieces of legislation which might not be constitutional, Aldo said (I'll paraphrase) it is more important to do the right thing and disregard the legal conflict. So perhaps it is Joe, trying to help Aldo, who is misleading your readers.

In the end, what is troubling me is a discussion I had with Aldo about this bill.

He referred to it as a "regional" issue. Pardon me? There is a reason we are called the Great Lakes State. Either you get it or you don't.

Christopher M. Casandus
Farmington Hills

Respect

In my opinion educating our children is one of the most important and fundamental responsibilities we have as a society.

We have a duty to teach our children how to think objectively and how to learn on their own so they can become independent; we also need to teach them how to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

As members of this society we have a duty to make our educational system work and function efficiently. Also, if we draw our livelihoods from society, then we have an obligation to give something back, and education should be at the top of the list.

I give credit and respect to all three candidates; namely, Karen Bolsen, John Goshorn and Cheryl Swaim who have decided to run for the school board. They are willing to be involved and willing to give something back.

Respect is something each of us need to practice during this campaign. Not only toward the candidates themselves, but toward each other by allowing people to freely hold differing opinions. Who ever wins this election, they deserve our support and we must give them a fair chance to succeed. If we don't support them sufficiently and they fail, we have failed too.

Wills Leads
Farmington Hills

14 Mile

I can't wait for the new outhouses at 14 Mile and Farmington Road to open. Each morning I pass by on my way to the office just about the time my water pill kicks in. As I said, I can't wait.

Only problem is I can't tell which one is the men's. I sure hope it isn't the one on the west side of Farmington.

Thomas Hunter
Bloomfield 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:
jhued@oe.hometown.com

QUOTABLE

"We are the actual portals to the answers."

— William Buhlman, author of *The Secret of the Soul*

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