

EDITORIALS

Political vandalism

'Tis the season, we guess, but that doesn't make it right.

Every four years around Harford County, and every two to a lesser extent, the political signs pop up everywhere. A street corner here, a front yard there and still another in a window. When it comes to the local elections, there's no escaping the campaigning.

There's nothing wrong with that. It's refreshing to see so many people get interested in a political race.

The number of signs will show us either how much support a candidate has, or how much money is in his or her coffers.

Some voters opt to keep their political choices to themselves; others decorate their lawns or businesses. Neither is right or wrong.

It's everyone's right to support a candidate, but it has to be done tactfully. It's one thing to be an advocate for your candidate, but it's another to go around bashing their opponent. That's just not right, but it's happening all too frequently around Harford County, and seemingly more to Democrats' signs. There's no need to be defacing the signs of your candidate's opposition, or any candidate for that matter, no matter how strongly you feel about your candidate. Rather than deface the opponent's sign, put that energy into supporting your own candidate.

Kim Wagner, chairman of the Republican Central Committee in Harford, said it best in her letter to the editor: "Republicans stand for small government, lower taxes and personal responsibility. If you ascribe to these beliefs, please leave the signs alone. Your greatest contribution is exercising your right to vote and support the candidates that share your values!"

Bad judgment

Some judges just don't get it.

Child abuse (sexual and otherwise) and child pornography are among the most heinous cases our court system adjudicates. Prison society recognizes there's something wrong with those who participate in the sexual exploitation of children and inmates deal harshly with such perverts.

Even the amoral understand what some judges either don't or won't: Grownups should not get sexual gratification from children. In yet another outrageous example of judicial leniency run amok, Harford County Circuit Court Judge Emory A. Plitt Jr. recently sentenced a man convicted of possession child pornography to essentially *nothing*. Walter Arthur Hayes, 45, of the first block of Melanie Drive in New Castle, Del., was convicted earlier this month of possession of child pornography.

Hayes was caught by his wife, who feared her husband was having an affair. Instead, she found he was downloading child pornography.

For that, Hayes, who worked as a secretary for the Department of Parole and Probation, will not serve any jail time. Here's his sentence from Plitt: 18 months in jail, with all but 30 days suspended. Plitt then gave Hayes credit for 30 days served.

The result? The 45-year-old who took pleasure in child pornography goes free rather than to jail. Any judge who would proffer such an insulting sentence is way out of touch with what decent people think is acceptable. Plitt's sentence in this case is not only a disservice, but also is an insult to all of the law-abiding people who do all they can to protect their children.

Retired, or not

Congratulations to the 53 Harford County government and outside agency employees who retired effective last Wednesday.

No doubt, they've worked many years and deserve to relax a little bit. For some of them, we're sure the deal of getting paid for all of their accrued sick time (versus the typical half) was the motivating factor. It was almost too good to pass up.

What was also too good to pass up was the offer Deputy County Attorney Nancy Giorno got from the county executive.

She retired with an annual salary of \$122,429. In retirement, in addition to a pension, she's going back to work contractually for the county. If there's work, so be it, she knows the job.

But what sounds a little outrageous is how much she's going to be making. Working what amounts to 18 to 20 hours a week, she'll be paid \$65,000 a year. That's more than half of what she made working full-time.

We know a lot of people who'd like to be making that kind of money working full-time.

This is nothing against Giorno, but why should she be paid so exorbitantly? Were she to be paid at the rate she was earning as a full-time employee, she should be paid around \$56,000 as a contract employee.

It just seems that, if the county is trying to save money in this buyout process, it's overspending on rehiring a retiree. We're not saying she's not valuable, but is she really worth that much in the eyes of anyone other than the county executive? And, if she was so irreplaceable, why was she allowed to retire?

Good work

A new fish is swimming around Harford County and its goal is to provide a necessary service to businesses at the same time it employs people with disabilities.

Sh'Arc the Shredder has been making its rounds at local businesses, tearing up documents that can't just be recycled because of their sensitive nature.

The Arc's microenterprise, featured in *The Aegis* pp&t section June 30, started in November 2009 and has been going strong since. Four clients of The Arc and their supervisor go into a business and spend however much time they need shredding private documents. Then they dispose of the shredded material, clean up and go home.

More important than providing a service to local businesses, the Sh'Arc is providing empowerment for people with disabilities. In a society where mainstreaming is a big buzz word, the Sh'Arc gives Arc clients a purpose, a job, a way to fit in with everyone else. They go to work, they do a job and they're paid for it. How much more mainstream can you get? And they do the job well. Sh'Arc customers gave rave reviews about the service.

"The service has been excellent. I definitely would recommend them to others," Lorrie Schenning, manager of the People's Bank on Main Street in Bel Air, said.

We commend The Arc for coming up with the idea, and for finding ways to enrich the lives of its members. It may sound trite, but it really is a win-win situation for everyone.

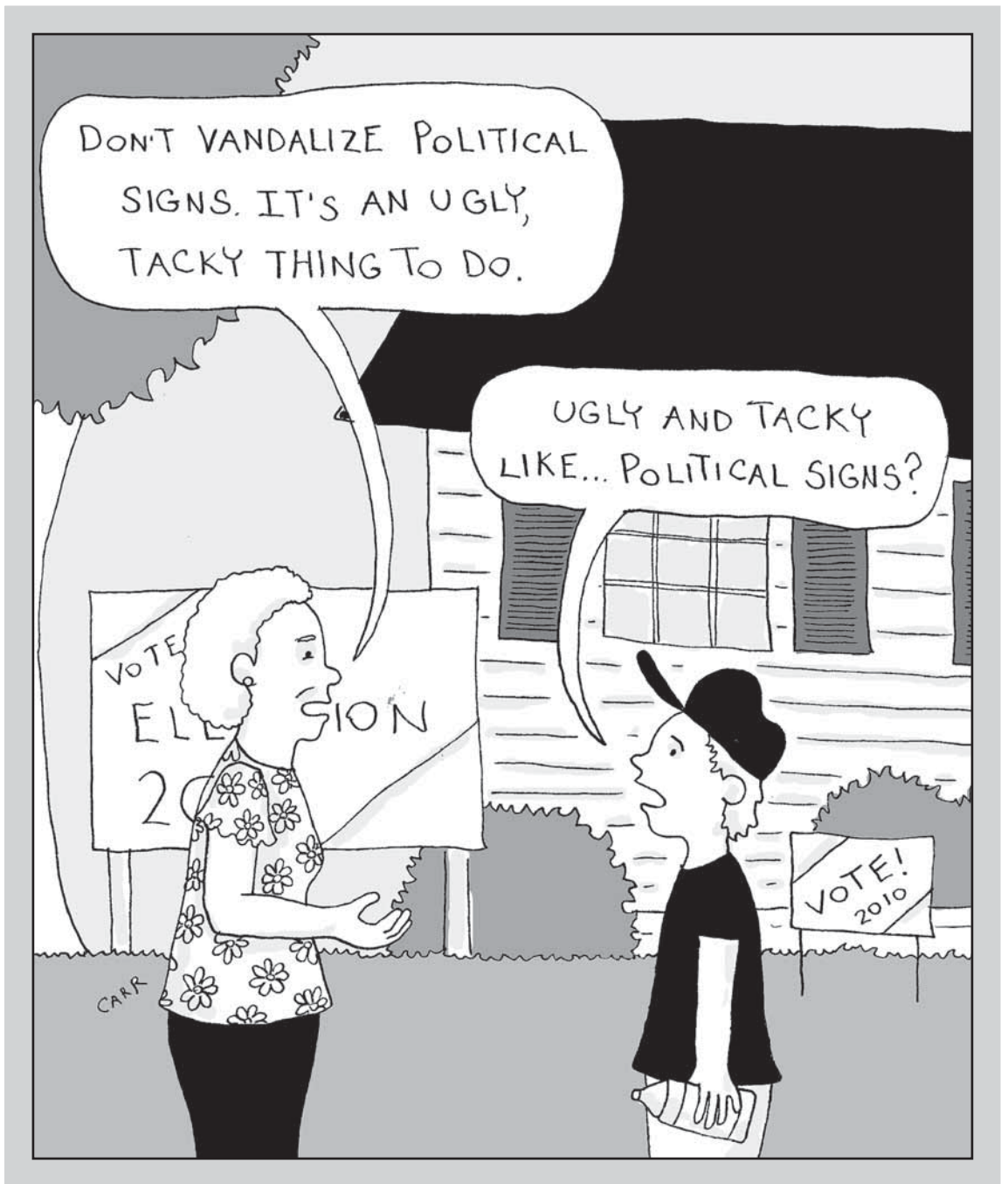
Letters to the editor

Letters should be fewer than 250 words and include the writer's name, address and day and evening telephone numbers. *The Aegis* welcomes letters from readers. All letters become the property of *The Aegis*, which reserves the right to edit each letter. By submitting a letter, the author grants *The Aegis* an irrevocable, non-exclusive right and license to use and republish the letter, in whole or in part, in all media and to authorize others to reprint it. *The Aegis* does not publish anonymous letters.

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OPEN FORUM



A District 34 resident Art Helton takes issue with challenge filed by opponent

Editor:

The recent *Aegis* article reporting attempts to stop my candidacy for the State Senate in District 34 needs clarification. I need to set the record straight.

My residence of record is in Joppatowne, in a home that my wife, Ann, and I purchased several years ago. There are several reasons for my making this move, not the least of which is to run for the senate in District 34 against Nancy Jacobs.

Over the past 40 years, I have lived in several homes in the district while continuing to maintain a small farm in Darlington. I have represented

every precinct in this district in Harford County previously as their Senator and as a member of the Harford County Council. My offices and businesses are and have been in this district for over the same 40 years.

I know this district and its people and will capably and caringly represent them. The fact that I changed my residency should have no bearing on this campaign. Our country, state and county all face serious challenges and I believe my experiences will allow me to help meet these challenging questions facing our citizens.

Art Helton
Joppa

Too much for pet projects

On dogs and taxes in Harford

Editor:

Enough is enough.

Regarding the June 30 Open Forum letter, "A case for grooming": I am sick and tired of being pulled through dirty cages from everybody at the Harford County Humane Society. My initial letter was not about dog grooming. It was about the waste of taxpayers' money on everything from a new grooming place to every little pet project somebody wants to do with "the taxpayers" money.

As we Americans celebrated our independence over the weekend, we need to realize the local, state and federal governments do not produce or sell anything. The only way they get money is to take it from hardworking people like myself.

I just opened my tax bill, thank you. I wonder

when the last time Ms. Stiles and all the other volunteers at the Humane Society actually looked at their pay stubs from their jobs and saw how much the government takes out.

Maybe they should redirect their energies into fundraising, like bake sales or a building fund drive.

You might be surprised to find out how generous people really are. We've been planning to get a new dog after vacation this summer. Now the question is: Where do I start? Maybe at a puppy mill, or maybe I'll spend \$200 at my local Humane Society. I'm really sorry if I hit a really really raw nerve, but with taxes as high as they are, enough is enough.

Dale Green
Street

On Toby Keith's performance

More than one way to show patriotism

Editor:

This letter is directed towards J. Caroline Martin, who wrote a letter published June 23 in the Open Forum: I read your rant about Toby Keith and would like to say a few things. You say Mr. Keith should have "Enlisted in the Military" to show his support for his country. I didn't realize that you had to join the armed forces to be patriotic or to be supportive of your country. I personally have not served in any of the armed services, but I consider myself to be a very patriotic and supportive person of the military, and you have also questioned my patriotism since I have not served.

Have you personally served in the service? If you have, then thank you for your service; if not, then how dare you question someone else's patriotism. Patriotism is shown in many ways, not

just by serving in the service!

As for the concert Mr. Keith performed at Aberdeen Proving Ground, you said the enlisted personnel should not have paid for their tickets; well they didn't. Their families may have bought tickets, but the enlisted did not.

Also the Gold Star Families received free tickets. Gold Star Family are a support group "In Memory of our Sons, Daughters, Spouses, Siblings and Family Members who Gave their All in the name of Freedom."

Mr. Keith took care of these families like no one will ever know. These are things a patriotic and supportive person does, not always serving in the service. Please be very careful when you question someone's patriotism and support.

Kate Wood
Fallston

Republicans 'hard working people'

Description of Democrats by Harford chairwoman applies to GOP, too

Editor:

Please inform your readers and Wendy Sawyer, chairwoman of the Harford County Democratic Central Committee, that Republicans are also "hard working people." We, too, "spend much of our time giving back to our communities, through Parks and Recreation with our children, Habitat for Humanity, our churches and other community endeavors." We are not all "country club folks." But if we are, that is our choice.

We "have to juggle our work lives, our family lives and our dedication to the ideals" not only to

the Republican Party, but also to the United States of America. I would assume that every candidate, regardless of party affiliation, would require "a great deal of passion" and "a great deal of money." Ms. Sawyer, "the shame of it all" is that you, as the Chair of the Harford County Democratic Central Committee, put into print your biased view [in a letter to the editor published Friday in *The Aegis* Open Forum]. Happy Fourth of July to all Americans.

Dawn Deffinbaugh Anderson
Bel Air