

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Outrage culture has no place on school board

To the editor:
Last week, the News Graphic ran an article covering an event on Oct. 12 hosted by the School Board recall faction. I also attended the event; here's my summary.

Of the 90-minute event, the candidates spoke for less than 10 minutes and shared no actual plans. It was simply designed for attendees to air grievances and feel "heard" by challengers with no idea how to actually operationalize change.

Curriculum was a key theme with the crowd's suggestions ranging from banning books to bringing back home economics to teaching personal finance. Fact: Personal finance is offered as a course to high school juniors and seniors, financial literacy a required course in 6th grade and FAC5, a similar course to home economics, is also available in middle school.

The article stated that there was "almost no opposition" in attendance. I am in opposition, and I did speak. I asked about cost, as there was no discussion about how these requested changes from the attendees would be funded. I was disappointed that none of the challengers tried to actually explain school budgeting so that we, the voters, can confirm that they understand it.

I also asked about how the recall challengers plan to represent all constituents, not just those who agree with them. I was booed by the audience when I spoke, and I was threatened with police removal by Amber Schroeder, the PR rep for the recall candidates.

My impression of the event: lots of anger but no substance.

The "outrage culture" that the recall faction has stoked has no business on our School Board. "These people don't represent our community. We cannot stand for the hatred and division that the recall faction represents and would bring into our schools."

Choose wisely, Mequon and Thiensville friends: Hollander, Khan, Schultz, Francour.

Becky Wudy
Mequon

Recall a dangerous proposition

To the editor:
Institutions, laws and traditions are important anchors against the ebbs and flows of feelings and fads. We may not always like them, but they help keep us from being carried away by whatever winds happen to prevail — winds like politics, special interests, fears, and feelings. They provide the glue that helps weld diverse individuals into communities, steer the course over the long haul, and prevent whiplash from chasing the "flavor of the day."

Those who wish to recall duly elected members of the Mequon-Thiensville School Board — public servants who have done nothing illegal or immoral — because they disagree or for special interests are playing a very dangerous short-term game.

Mike McIntyre
Mequon

MTSD recall candidate using Nazi imagery is way beyond wrong

To the editor:
As the November 2, 2021, election day nears, politics and emotions are at a fever pitch over the proposed Mequon-Thiensville School District recall. Does a district consistently rated as one of the best in the country need radical change? I am carefully asking the challengers, What do they stand for, and what do they propose?

My father was a Holocaust survivor. I am deeply disturbed by candidate Kris Kittel's posts continually referencing our government with Nazis. On July 14, Kittel posted a gut-wrenching picture of murdered dead Jews lying in a mass grave with a caption "Is far more dangerous than COVID." Is this how Kittel protests district health policy? What a shameful abuse and misuse of Holocaust imagery. Kittel seems fine having crossed the line to anti-Semitism and racism.

These images insult Mequon's aging Holocaust survivor community. Kittel's race is not about moms and better education as the Recall/Restore would have us naively believe. It is a vendetta which Kittel himself acknowledges to institute his extremist changes to the curriculum. Recall/Restore operatives are now receiving official support from Republican gubernatorial candidate Rebecca Kleefisch, assistance from the WILL organization, which receives funding from the Bradley Foundation.

Where is the outrage from Kittel's supporters? Why are his minions willing to give him a pass? How can he be qualified to sit on a school board all the while supporting misuse of liberty, employing hate, racism and anti-Semitism? Where are the voices in the Recall/Restore group calling him out? Apparently they all buy in, as do the Patriots of Ozaukee.

There is no room in Mequon or our schools for this type of ugly anti-Semitism and racism. As I see it voting for any in the Recall/Restore slates justifies this ugly dark side. Frankly, Kittel should immediately withdraw.

Marvin J. Tick
Mequon

Yes, you can support both district and recall

To the editor:
I am a supporter of MTSD and our exceptional teachers and staff and that is why I signed the petition in support of the recall.

My husband and I are loving, caring people who only want the best for this community, school district and our kids. This

recall initiative was started by caring parents who, like us, simply want to support their kids' needs and ensure high-quality education. If you are hearing or seeing information telling you otherwise, please do not be misled.

Why because I support the recall, am I being told I don't support MTSD? That's not the case at all. Our family has a great relationship with the quality teachers and staff at the schools. When we have concerns, we discuss them directly with the staff involved and the result has been healthy two-way dialogue. We are dissatisfied with the MTSD Board of Education, however, because we and other parents have been dismissed and ignored when respectfully expressing concerns and input. School staff has told us they are equally frustrated about restrictions being imposed that are negatively impacting students' learning time. And the lack of transparency from the BOE regarding curriculum, district training and MTSD philosophies is most alarming. Currently, the BOE exhibits complacency and serious room for improvement in several areas.

Regardless of the vote outcome, I hope that all of us as a community stay respectful and united. People with differing opinions should feel safe and encouraged to engage in healthy dialogue. We all get better by lifting each other up. 2.) Board members remember: Proactively engaging and being responsive to concerns of parents and teachers is expected. The district's job is to provide a quality learning environment focused on core curriculum standards and the community deserves full transparency into what is being taught.

Lisa Newcomer
Mequon

No, CRT isn't being taught in our schools

To the editor:
To suggest that critical race theory is being taught in our high schools, let alone elementary schools, is preposterous. To fully understand CRT, one has to understand a body of legal scholarship written in academic prose often too difficult for someone who has advanced degrees. I was first introduced to CRT during my doctoral studies. It took me five years to fully steep myself in this framework. To say that children are studying red-lining, constitutional law, and hegemony as analyzed by CRT, is suggesting that our teachers are teaching Ph.D.-level coursework to 8-10-year-olds.

People are clearly misunderstanding what critical race theory is, and misconstruing its use when speaking of equity, diversity and inclusion curricula and policy. The real and obvious issue is that some people don't want curriculums or even classroom conversations that ask hard questions about race, class, gender, disability, or other factors that make the experience of school different for some students than for others. Some of the most vocal anti-CRT voices are parents who would be the first to demand equity if their daughter had a learning disability or their son had a mental health issue that they were struggling with. They would be demanding equal access if their son had a physical impairment and the school didn't have elevators, or their daughter had a disfigurement and other students were making rude, disparaging or shaming comments. Yet, when our schools or teachers point out that black students don't find it funny and that it's racist that Homestead students re-enact the choking and strangulation of George Floyd we are suddenly a district that teaches CRT.

Public education has a mandate to make schools equitable. Good teachers push students to think critically. Excellent teachers demand analysis. None of this is CRT. Check your facts.

Dr. Anna R Silberberg
Mequon

Shut down the recall frenzy

To the editor:
The MTSD School Board recall candidates could have run six months ago in the regular election but didn't. We need to shut down this recall frenzy.

Elections are at the heart of our democracy. We have regular elections to ensure people who are not happy with elected officials have a chance to run against them or vote them out. Yet not one of the four candidates running against the current Mequon-Thiensville School Board ran when they had a chance to run in a regular school board election just six months ago. School board recall elections by special interest groups have become a trend nationwide. These groups rely on low-turnout elections when nothing else is on the ballot, focus on divisive issues to polarize communities and count on only those at either end of the spectrum to vote.

Unfortunately it's too late to save the money — and time, energy and civility — as the MTSD School Board recall election is costing our community. But we can help shut down this recall frenzy by getting as many people out to vote as possible on Nov. 2. We urge our neighbors in Mequon and Thiensville to vote Nov. 2 to retain our duly elected School Board — please vote for Hollander, Khan, Francour and Schultz.

Kate Flood
Patrick Laske
Mequon

Don't politicize schools — vote no on recall

To the editor:
Remember a time when school board meetings were free from the public hurling accusations, insults and engaging in disorderly conduct? While the Mequon-Thiensville Board of Education meetings have not gotten as bad as some of those seen around the country, they are not all sunshine and roses.

One has to wonder who is behind the

politically savvy effort to recall four of the MTSD's School Board members. The influence of outside political groups can be seen in how the recall effort's claims continue to shift, in a way that seems to follow guidance from the Manhattan Institute. Their complaints began with discontent over COVID mitigations, then when the pandemic waned shifted to school board governance issues and now have moved to inflated concerns over critical race theory, the latest inflammatory topic. Recalling four MTSD School Board members seems far from a grassroots effort of parents concerned about their children's education. If those involved in the recall effort are strictly doing this to improve the education of kids in MTSD, why are they popping up at candidate launch events? Why did they make the same arguments at the Whitefish Bay School Board meeting?

Backed by extreme political groups like the Patriots of Oz, the recall group mirrors efforts across the country to replace school board members for political gain. Consider that when deciding who to support. Let's not politicize the oversight of our high-achieving local schools. Vote to keep the experienced, nonpartisan, responsible school board members so they can continue to work for our students and our community at large.

Amy Williamson
Thiensville

Misleading information from Restore MTSD

To the editor:
Recently, members of our community received unsolicited text messages from the Restore MTSD effort, which were incredibly misleading. It included a graph related to MTSD's Milestone #1 — Reading to Grade-Level Proficiency (Grades K-2). The graph looks alarming without explanation and context. The goal is to have every student reading independently BY GRADE 3.

The graph shows that pre-pandemic, we generally had 90-95% of students achieving that goal early (somewhere between grades K-2). The graph then shows that we slipped to 81-84% of students meeting the goal early in 2020 and 2021. If you simply scroll to the bottom of the MTSD website page on which the milestones are listed, important information and context is provided. Due to the pandemic and mandatory school closure in March of 2020, the district could not perform early reading assessments. The data represents where students were at in January of 2020. Furthermore, in the 2020-2021 school year, 25% of students chose virtual learning and on campus learning continued to be affected by the pandemic. Despite these challenges, 81-84% of K-2 students met the goal of reading independently by third grade — EARLY. The Restore MTSD effort, either do not understand this information or they don't care. Either way, they shouldn't be on our board.

Furthermore, the district knows that they are unfinished learning due to the pandemic and has a plan to specifically address this for all students who are not on their projected trajectory. I see no such plan from the Restore candidates. The only plan I have heard from them regarding education is to put parents on curriculum committees. To have people like the Restore candidates, who seemingly don't care to take the time to dig deep enough to understand data in context, representing our community? Perish the thought.

Julie Smallwood
Mequon

Sign, sign everywhere a sign

To the editor:
As I drive through Thiensville and Mequon, I am struck by the rapidly increasing number of yard signs related to the upcoming School Board recall election. Some of the signs in this "sign war" verge on being billboards.

My opinion is that the people who display signs in their yards have a responsibility to keep up with the constantly emerging backstory for this recall and make a daily decision about keeping their signs visible.

Why has this occurred? On the one hand, this appears to be a rarely held but very legal school board recall election that could have been waited for the normal elections coming up in six months. But this is nothing like any other election I've seen during my 46 years as a voting member of the community. There seems to be a much larger agenda at play here that involves excessive financial and ideological pressure on our local, nonpartisan School Board and an unwarranted sense of urgency. Terms like "hijack," "corruption" and "abdication of responsibilities" are suddenly part of our normally civil lexicon.

Is this really what people, especially those who've decided to support the recall with yard signs, want for our community? Do they want to see the recall as a highly partisan groups dividing our community?

I hope yard sign people on both sides of the issues will ask themselves at least once a day, "Is this very public stand I'm taking the best for my community?" and act accordingly.

Bob Blazich
Thiensville

Cedarburg schools failing in COVID mitigation

To the editor:
The Cedarburg School District has had 82 positive COVID cases since the start of the school year, as of last week. Last year at this time, there were only 26 positive cases. The week of October 18, there were five positive COVID cases in one Parkview Elementary classroom alone. Despite the fact that there are 56 more positive cases this year compared to last year, and COVID outbreaks in classrooms of chil-

dren ineligible for vaccination, the Cedarburg School Board still believes this is a normal school year and will not put appropriate COVID mitigation measures in place.

Not only has the School Board prohibited public discussion regarding COVID at School Board meetings, it has removed all transparency for its decision making and provided no justification for its refusal to follow even the most basic COVID mitigation measures. According to the Washington Ozaukee Public Health Department, when the COVID transmission rate is high like it is right now in Ozaukee County, school districts should follow eight mitigation measures. The district is only following three of these measures: cleaning, ventilation, and handwashing/respiratory etiquette. Our school district is not masking, physical distancing to the greatest extent possible, promoting vaccination, providing screening testing, or contact tracing as recommended by the WOPHD. How can our school district possibly claim it does on its website that "(in)struction (this year) will be provided in the safest environment possible?"

It is an awful feeling sending your 11-year-old unvaccinated child to school every day in an environment that is unsafe. Our family will never forget how this current School Board has completely mishandled COVID mitigation measures this school year and I hope you will not forget it either on April 5, when four of the seven Cedarburg School Board positions are open for election.

Suzy McManus
Cedarburg

Congress must act now to give Wisconsinites fair drug prices

To the editor:
Susan from Wisconsin is a perfect example of why Congress needs to pass legislation to bring down the costs of prescription drugs. She recently told us that no one — including herself — should be forced to choose between buying groceries or their prescribed medications.

Sadly, Susan is far from alone. In a recent AARP survey, more than half of voters age 50-plus were worried about being able to afford the medications they or their family members need. It's no wonder that older adults worry about the cost of prescription drugs.

AARP has tracked price trends for nearly two decades, and our research consistently finds that the prices for brand-name medications most often used by seniors are increasing much faster than prices for other goods and services.

Our newest Rx Price Watch Report looked at specialty drugs that treat complex, chronic conditions and found that the average cost to use one of these drugs for a year was \$84,442 in 2020. That's nearly three times the average annual income of someone on Medicare. This can't go on. Congress must act, and they must act now.

The good news is that bills currently before Congress would save both seniors and taxpayers billions of dollars on prescription drugs — and ensure that Americans are paying fair prices for the medications we need. It's outrageous that we have to pay three times what people in other countries pay for the same medicine.

AARP has urged Congress to act in three key areas. First, allow Medicare to negotiate the prices it pays for prescription drugs. Every year, Medicare spends more than \$129 billion on prescription drugs. Yet it's prohibited by law from using its buying power to negotiate with drug companies to get lower prices.

Giving Medicare the power to negotiate will save taxpayers and people on Medicare \$117 billion and lower prescription drug costs for all Americans.

Second, create an annual out-of-pocket cap on what people on Medicare pay for their prescription drugs. No one should have to choose between buying medicine and paying for food or rent.

Finally, we want Congress to require drug companies to pay a rebate if they raise the price of existing drugs faster than the rate of inflation. Our Rx Price Watch Reports have found that this happens year after year — and Americans would pay far less for their medications if those prices only rose as fast as other goods and services.

Americans are sick and tired of paying the highest prices in the world for their prescription drugs. Congress needs to lower prices now.

Sam Wilson
State director,
AARP Wisconsin
Madison

Deadline for recall letters is Oct. 26

The deadline for letters pertaining to the Mequon-Thiensville School District recall election is noon Tuesday, Oct. 26.

Letters should be signed and include phone number and address so that we may verify authenticity. Neither phone number nor address will be printed.

Please keep letters to no more than 300 words. Letter writers are limited to one letter every 30 days. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Email: letters@conley.net.com