

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Redistricting

After attending the Fort George G. Meade redistricting meetings and hearings, I can say the proposal in front of the board of education is not in the best interest of military children or taxpayers.

The proposal would transform West Meade Elementary School into an Early Childhood Center housing only ECI, preschool and kindergarten students. The new Pershing Hill Elementary and Manor View Elementary would then house first-through fifth-graders only.

It is no secret military children have to transition on a regular basis. Through no fault of their own, they may attend five to eight (or more) different schools in their lifetime. Creating an early childhood center would be asking our kindergartners to attend one school for kindergarten and yet another school for first grade. It is our duty to ease the burden on the youngest members of our military community, not add to it.

Second, the new Pershing Hill Elementary has been constructed with a dedicated Early Childhood Wing. Eight specially designed classrooms with carpet, age-appropriate bathrooms and drinking fountains will go to waste.

Instead, county Chief Operating Officer Alex Szachniewicz said at the Feb. 16 public hearing, additional money will be spent to make West Meade a true Early Childhood Center.

He described purchases such as SMART boards for every classroom, window screens for the cafeteria and age-appropriate playground equipment to "ensure those students attend a school that is best suited for them." Those updated facilities already exist at the new Pershing Hill. Use them. Fiscal responsibility should be a top priority in this economic downturn.

The best proposal is the straight redistricting proposal (simply redrawing boundary lines) that was presented. It entails less transitions for our children, no additional money to be spent, as well as alleviating overcrowding at post schools.

AMY TRIMBLE
Fort George G. Meade

Public libraries

So funding for libraries is being cut again. Who cares?

Well, how about all the people who lost their jobs this past year? They use library computers in their job searches or to fill out applications. They might even be checking the classified ads in the newspaper because they had to cancel their subscriptions.

How about the young mother who wants a better life for her children, so she takes them to story time at the library and checks out books to read to them at home? She is instilling in her children a lifelong love of learning. That's immeasurable.

And what about the students — from elementary through college level — who need to do research? It's more than just going to the library; they need the state-of-the-art resources available on-line through the library website. They also need the expertise of librarians who can teach them how to find the information they need quickly. While Google can give you 50,000 responses to your inquiry, your librarian can help you find the one answer you need.

Let's not forget those with physical disabilities, such as poor eyesight; they need large print books. Or for those who travel a lot — whether for business or a long, daily commute — books on CD help them take advantage of otherwise wasted time.

The average citizen saves thousands of dollars a year by using libraries. A library can squeeze more value from a dollar than any other organization.

Libraries are America's great information equalizers — the only place people of all ages and backgrounds can find and freely use such a diversity of resources.

MERRY AELLO
Annapolis

Absence of angels

I am writing to correct a significant error in the editorial titled "An absence of angels" (*The Capital*, March 11). The editorial states: "Academy and city officials, in a bid to reduce traffic headaches from the graduation ceremony, have moved it from its traditional spot on the Friday before the Memorial Day weekend to the following Tuesday." This is untrue.

The previous superintendent of

the Naval Academy, in a unilateral decision and with no prior notice to anyone, moved the graduation ceremony from the Friday before to the Tuesday after Memorial Day with the Blue Angels flying on the Memorial Day weekend.

Public and private agencies were completely taken aback by this decision because the economic implications are quite negative. The traditional "Commissioning Week" with Blue Angels flying Tuesday and Wednesday and culminating with graduation on Friday was never considered a traffic nightmare; in fact it went quite smoothly.

Flying the Blue Angels on Memorial Day weekend (heaviest travel weekend of the year) would have been a traffic nightmare, but the Navy informed us in early November of 2010 that the Blue Angels also had a prior commitment on Memorial Day and therefore weren't available to perform in Annapolis at all.

The sad fact is that the Navy alone chose to turn its back on arguably the most Navy friendly city in the nation, home to the Naval Academy since its founding. This action effectively eliminates the traditional Commissioning Week in Annapolis and will deprive its newly commissioned officers the honor of a Blue Angel tribute.

So much for Navy tradition.
DAVID W. HUMPHREYS
Annapolis
(The author is executive director of the Annapolis Regional Transportation Management Association.)

Public broadcasting

The Capital (March 11) editorial proposes that public broadcasting should not be funded at all from tax dollars. You claim that in this age of 24/7 media, and only a minor percentage of funding going to support public media, that the corporation for public broadcasting can survive on its own.

You obviously are too busy writing the newspaper to look at the economics of producing middle of the road, nonprofit, electronic media. The small amount of funding public broadcasting receives (\$1.13/rural from each of us) allows large rural portions of our nation unsupported by high-speed Internet to receive quality programming and local news (not nationally repackage and slanted news, or just top 40).

It also keeps public broadcasting from swerving off into conservative and liberal bias that is devoid of a basis in facts. The small amount of government funding is seed money for bringing in funds from the private sector.

You argue on principle that funding should be dropped. I would argue on principle the government should be providing some funding for the public good — news and arts that is not shouting in your face, but is thoughtful, inventive and entertaining and willing to discuss sensitive issues.

Just because it does not win the majority of the public's eyes and ears and challenges our assumptions is not a good argument to eliminate it. It is available to all when they realize they do need it to help form rational views of the world.

To claim that the private market always produces the best result flies in the face of millennia of practical experience. The common ground is always destroyed. Cooperative work with government rules/incentives and private innovation/drive will always do a better job for the common good.

BRITT GRISWOLD
Annapolis

Rights

If you stand by and let another's rights be taken away, eventually the tyrants will get to you and yours.

What is happening across our country is the systematic destruction of the American democracy in favor of a ruthless, mindless plutocracy where persons (real or corporate) exercise power over others by the right of wealth.

Deregulation and a defanged federal government unleashed the greed and arrogance of Wall Street leading to an obscene shift in wealth in this country. In 2011, 400 corporate financiers on Wall Street control more than the total wealth of 150 million Americans and nearly 25 percent of our children are living in poverty.

This orchestrated transfer of wealth has emboldened Republicans to further undermine our constitutional democracy by removing necessary checks and balances.

Under the guise of emergency fiscal austerities, the republican legislators in Wisconsin and Michigan have bestowed on their respective governors absolute powers over aspects of the public domain.

Gov. Walker of Wisconsin, a college dropout, can dispose of the state's energy resources, including three power plants, without legislative oversight, without competitive bidding.

In Michigan, the Republican legislature endowed Gov. Snyder with the authority to dissolve local governments at will. He can arbitrarily dismiss local elected officials and appoint private overseers for any city or town within the state.

This dismantling of democracy has trickled down to Anne Arundel County, where the Republican-controlled County Council and County Executive Leopold recently did away with "binding arbitration" for public employees in conflict with the county charter.

If any one of them had revealed such intentions during their respective campaigns, they would have been defeated. This erosion of citizen rights by powerful special interests in this country is real and ongoing. The godfather looks good on TV but I don't want him running my country.

MARYELLEN BRADY
Edgewater

Habitat

We thought Earl Kelly did a terrific job of capturing the sense of pride and accomplishment that a community shares when people come together to build habitat houses and dedicate those houses to deserving families (*The Sunday Capital*, Feb. 27.)

And we thank Russ Hewitt for his positive remarks about Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake's work in his letter to the editor (*The Capital*, March 8.)

Hewitt did, however, cover several points in his letter that provide us with a perfect "teachable moment."

Hewitt asks why habitat homeowners can't "buy their own homes like the majority of public employees?" In fact, all three families mentioned in the story — and all habitat families — buy their homes through habitat's mortgage program.

Since Habitat for Humanity of the Chesapeake families are investing in their own homes, we take great care to screen, select and prepare families for the opportunities and the challenges of homeownership. Our community partners trust habitat to exercise care when working with our clients.

The project on Clay Street was a part of Annapolis' effort to "re-invent public housing." In this instance, our partner, the Housing Authority of Annapolis, stipulated that we find habitat homeowners among the families in good standing who were living in public housing. We were happy to cooperate — and we are thrilled that before we are finished with this extraordinary project — 11 families, who used to live in public housing in Annapolis, will purchase their habitat home and realize the dream of homeownership.

MIKE MITCHELL
CEO
Habitat for Humanity
of the Chesapeake

American culture

I read, with great joy, Anthony Sudol's letter (*The Capital*, March 12) deriding the moral erosion of American culture that has occurred over the past few decades.

Sudol began by lamenting the legalization of abortion. I realize this is a contentious issue and I don't fault the man for taking a side in the debate. He criticized "liberal judges" for releasing rapists and child molesters, "under the guise of rehabilitation," and wondered to myself how many "conservative judges" had done the same, but were beyond Sudol's criticism.

I understand the despair Sudol must feel and I certainly offer him no scorn for adhering to and vocalizing his political opinions. My acceptance of our political differences and both of our abilities to freely voice our opinions are parts of what makes this nation great.

But, really, I couldn't help but laugh at the irony of his next two points. In one sentence, he obviously tips his hand against gay marriage, noting that "those in favor" introduced the idea that gay marriage is normal "into the school system to brainwash undeveloped minds." That's fine, I don't begrudge him his opinions; I don't

necessarily think you are a bigot, as many would claim, for feeling the way you do, and I can even see why you would feel that way.

His next point, however, addresses scholastic wrestling. I should add here that I enjoy grappling and know there is nothing sexual about the sport. But, he goes on to chastise the school systems that allow heterosexual wrestling, for "legitimizing teenage groping." In light of his comments regarding scholastic homosexual behavior, would he prefer that teenage boys limit themselves to groping only other teenage boys?

SEAN MCCARTHY
Annapolis

Wind generators

I understand and agree with Gov. O'Malley's proposal to finance offshore wind generators. I also understand the opposition to increasing our electricity costs to finance them, as I, too, don't want to spend a dime more than I have to.

As I write this, over 100,000 people are evacuating the areas near the nuclear power plants in Japan, which are experiencing meltdowns resulting from the earthquake and tsunami.

Because of acts of God, human error and mechanical breakdowns, we can count on such catastrophic disasters. Both nuclear power and natural gas-fired plants are vulnerable due to their volatile nature and our iffy ability to manage them correctly and safely. Only time will tell the full extent of damage being done by the radiation leakage.

We enjoy our comforts and don't like to pay a lot for them. Solar, wind, hydro — all are expensive, especially because we have not invested in their development as we have in nuclear and gas. But, we have to ask ourselves, what do we want for our future generations? Do we want to give them inexpensive energy, but burden them with the horrors of disasters such as this; or do we want to bite the bullet, spend the money, and develop clean sources of energy now, which will be safe for them to enjoy in the future?

Thank you, O'Malley, for putting a safe, clean environment for our children first. Too often we react selfishly and refuse to spend our money wisely.

CAROLYN PESTERFIELD
Millersville

Theater loss

The Anne Arundel theater world recently lost two great voices. Exactly two weeks apart Bob Kauffman and Tim King passed away. They both had great influence on the local theater scene and the reverberations of their loss will be felt for quite some time.

Kauffman led the Anne Arundel Community College's theater department for many years. He encouraged countless students in a love of theater and taught them the craft of making good theater. He directed at the Children's Theatre of Annapolis and served on the board of the Chesapeake Arts Center. He was a mentor to many and a thoughtful warm-hearted friend I cherished.

King was a versatile, thoughtful man. Guitarist, actor and collector of old histories, Tim was Maryland proud. He shared his love of music with many students and his love of theater with all his audiences. He played John Proctor in Dignity Players' "The Crucible" last fall and he was extraordinary and fierce in that role. I am so grateful I saw that great performance and heard that great voice one more time.

Both Bob and Tim were gentle, soft-spoken men and in this noisy, confrontational world perhaps that is exactly why they left such a wide legacy of fond memories, funny anecdotes and aching sadness at their loss.

The lights of the Anne Arundel theater world are a bit dimmer these days without Bob and Tim. We mourn them, we miss them, we thank them for so many great performances and the company they gave us, and we celebrate the joy of having known them.

DAVINA GRACE HILL
Linthicum

Unions

Employment in Michigan declined 4.8 percent during a recent five-year period while job growth in right-to-work states grew an average of 6.4 percent.

Michigan's per capita income decreased 7.8 percent compared to the national average. Michigan's gross state product grew by 3.4 percent, the slowest of all 50 states.

Growth in right-to-work states averaged 18.1 percent; more than five times that of Michigan's. Michigan is an economic basket case. Michigan also is one of the most unionized states in the nation. (mackinac.org/9150)

A larger study to determine the accuracy of AFL/CIO claims that unions make states and employees more prosperous found that jobs in right-to-work states grew 17.6 percent during a 10-year period while jobs increased only 8.9 percent in closed-shop states. State economic growth was 41.8 percent versus 33.5 percent.

Clearly, the facts are opposite to unions' claims. Closed-shop states actually suffer significant economic harm by catering to unions. Unions counter that both studies were conducted by conservative organizations. That may be, but unions have never shown where error occurred in analyzing the government data on which the reports were based. Regrettably, media coverage has been minimal.

Members' dues give unions enormous clout during elections. Unions gave politicians \$700 billion during the last two election cycles. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, about 90 percent of those funds went to Democrats even though exit polls of trade unionists indicated their votes were divided evenly between the parties. Dues also pay the salaries of union officers.

Given the downward trend in union membership, the Wisconsin state house exhortations of the president of the AFL/CIO are understandable even if they have failed to prevent limitations on bargaining power of public employees.

ROGER CARLQUIST
Annapolis

Obama administration

If "Obamacare" was to become the "be all and end all" health care proposal the Democratic party suggested, then why are big "unions," and now the entire state of Maine, getting exemptions from the legislation?

What ever happened to "fairness" in applying the law? When will the media stop protecting the Obama administration?

The Democrats sold us a bill of goods — they told us all the citizens were to pay into the plan to make it affordable. What now?

Are Marylanders going to get stuck with the bill for all those people who are exempt?

By the way, how is the higher cost of gas working for all you people who depend on driving to work? No matter what you may have heard, this spike in gas prices is not due to unrest in the Middle East. It is the result of our nation's energy policy by not allowing us to use our ample domestic supplies of fossil fuels, compliments of Congress and the environmental lobby.

I hope you will enjoy \$10 for a gallon of gas, resulting from our dependence on foreign nations to supply us with energy.

Can windmills and solar panels fuel your car or be pumped into the tanks of the trucks that deliver food and supplies to our stores? Did you know that when the wind does not blow, natural gas turns the turbine?

DON SHANKLE
Davidsonville

American Indians

I cannot fathom the flawed reasoning of legislators who believe that illegal immigrants deserve a tuition break.

These persons are in our country illegally, but our legislators are allowing illegal immigrants to attend college here at the reduced rate of in-state tuition — a privilege intended for taxpaying Maryland citizens.

While deep budget cuts are being proposed for our cash-strapped education system, we are generously supporting those who ignore our laws. If any people deserve tuition breaks, let it be the American Indians. This was their land in the first place and we shamefully lied, broke treaties and pushed these proud people onto cramped, barren reservations, where they are struggling to survive today.

The constant complaining of supposed underprivileged groups today is never heard from these true Americans — and they never receive a helping hand. They are struggling to educate their children so that they can leave the reservation for a better life. How can we continue to finance the "gate crashers" while the original "hosts" starve to death?

JOAN HOWE
Annapolis