

"Federation Corner" column
Montgomery Sentinel - September 9, 2010

Generic campaign speech

by Jim Humphrey
Chair, Planning and Land Use Committee,
Montgomery County Civic Federation

As voters prepare to go to the polls on Primary Day, next Tuesday, I felt the need to reflect on the quality of the promises we have heard throughout this campaign season. The following campaign speech might be delivered by any candidate seeking election to the offices of Montgomery County Executive, Council member, or State Senator or Delegate...and has been. It could be employed by a candidate from any political party at any time, regardless of the specific issues of the day which the county may be facing.

While the speech is intended as satire, it is not meant to disparage the concept of public service by elected officials, which is necessary to our representative democracy. It is meant more as a criticism of most of the current crop of candidates for the absence of meaningful discussion of timely issues in any depth or specificity.

My fellow Montgomery County residents, I am asking for your vote and your support in my campaign to serve as your (fill in name of office here). Today, our county (choose one of the following) A. stands at a crossroads; B. is at a turning point; C. is poised at the dawn of a new era.

I did not make the decision to run for office lightly, for we face great challenges. But with great challenges come great opportunities. I believe that we can meet those challenges, realize those opportunities, and be all the stronger for having done so.

The time for "business as usual" has passed. It is time for new solutions. We need to develop today's tools to tackle today's problems. And, together, I believe we can find the solutions and develop the tools we need.

The road ahead will not be an easy one. Tough choices will have to be made in the days to come. This will require leadership and commitment...the kind of leadership and commitment that I believe I can provide. But I cannot do it alone. I will need your help to make ours a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

There are three basic elements of good government--transparency, accountability and citizen inclusion in decision making. If elected, I will strive to make these the hallmarks of my service in office. My office door will always be open; and I will always be available to explain my actions, listen to new ideas, and address your needs.

Together, we must strengthen our communities to insure that they are safe, attractive places to raise our families. This will require some sacrifice. But I share your values, and will lead the fight to maintain the investment in our schools, roads, transit, parks and libraries. At the same time, it is critical that we keep the budget in check, so that we do not mortgage our children's futures in order to pay the cost of that investment. I will make it my goal to find new ways to increase the county coffers, while struggling to not raise taxes on the rich, who already contribute much, on the endangered middle class, or on the poorest and most vulnerable among us.

We must support and strengthen the businesses that currently exist in the county, particularly our financially strapped small businesses. At the same time, we need to attract new businesses that will offer new jobs for county residents, better jobs in (select one or more of the following) A. clean energy research and development; B. environmental management; C. the genetics and biosciences industry. We will need to

provide world-class educational opportunities to train the employees that will fill those jobs. And we must provide quality, affordably priced housing for those workers.

We must continue to grow in order to maintain a healthy, vital economy. But the unchecked growth of the past has led to some unexpected and undesired results--traffic congestion, overcrowded schools, air and water pollution, and the like. Therefore, as we strive to continue to grow, we must make sure that growth does not harm the environment or the quality of life that makes this county the place we have chosen to live. This will require wise growth--focusing the right kind of growth in the places in which we want to grow, while at the same time preserving the green, open spaces that we cherish.

(The following is for use by incumbents seeking reelection) Throughout my time in office, I have developed a proven track record of service. I spearheaded the effort to (fill in your most successful accomplishment here). And, if reelected, I will continue to demonstrate that your concerns are my concerns, too.

(The following is for use by those seeking election for the first time) Although I have not previously sought public office, I believe I have the knowledge and skills necessary for the job. My experience as a (fill in your most notable past employment here) will serve me well. And, if elected, I will demonstrate that your concerns are my concerns, too.

A brighter future lies ahead for Montgomery County. There are those who say it can't be done. But I don't believe the naysayers, and I don't think you do either. With your support, I will win my bid for election, and will work for you and lead the fight for our future by providing real results. Together, let's make a better tomorrow for our children and their children.

Don't forget to vote in the Primary Elections next Tuesday. It's your civic duty!

The views expressed in this column do not necessarily reflect formal positions adopted by the Federation. To submit an 800-1000 word column for consideration, send as an email attachment to montgomerycivic@yahoo.com