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We need change in Radnor

To the Editor:

As a parent of two daughters who attend Radnor Elementary School, I have been disappointed, surprised and frankly appalled to learn that historically we have had so many school-board members who are not invested in our schools and despite their "apparent" interest in the Radnor School District do not send their children to any of the Radnor schools. How can we trust school-board members to make the best decisions for our schools and our students if they do not stake the future of their own children on the excellence of the Radnor School District? All voters in Radnor, whether they have children who attend public school or not, have an incentive through the market value of their homes to want our schools to be top-notch. The legacy of previously "disengaged" school-board members has led to a ballooning debt of over \$100 million, projected budget deficits of \$3 million in next year's budget, deletion of worthwhile programs and the threat of growing class sizes. We can no longer afford to have school-board directors who have had limited experience and/or participation in our schools.

With the coming election on Nov. 3, voters have an opportunity to elect four school-board directors to the Radnor School Board who all currently have children in the district or whose grown children attended Radnor schools, and who have historically been deeply engaged in the issues of our schools. The Democratic slate Leaders for Radnor Excellence composed of Rob Armstrong, Doug Blazey, Lydia Solomon and incumbent school director Brucie Rapoport are exemplary individuals who believe that the future success of their children is inextricably linked to the educational success of our public schools. These are individuals who have been actively involved in their children's schools, have sought leadership positions within the schools through parent-teacher organizations and who believe we should achieve excellence in student education in the Radnor School District. Combined they are able to offer voters their experience as civic leaders, educators, business professionals and financial managers. Rob Armstrong, Doug Blazey, Lydia Solomon and Brucie Rapoport believe in fiscal discipline and will focus our tax dollars exclusively on those initiatives that promote student education so that we can achieve and maintain educational excellence in the Radnor schools. This is the approach we need to maintain classroom size, attract and retain the best teachers, and ensure that budgets are dedicated only to initiatives that promote tangible benefits for students.

I have reservations regarding the newly revised Republican slate of candidates who are representing their party since none of the three incumbent Republicans on the school board up for election have decided to run

again. The departure of former Republican school-board candidate Ira Miles, who performed poorly compared to his running mates in the primary, and the hasty inclusion of slate “placeholder” Howard Gartland have given me further cause for concern that the Republican candidates are ill-equipped for the job. In the recent article about Mr. Gartland in Main Line Media News there is no mention of Mr. Gartland having any involvement in any parent-teacher organizations or of being engaged in the issues facing our schools prior to now, yet now he wants voters to believe that he actively represents the best interest of our schools and students.

The Republican slate appears to be just as “disengaged” with issues of the school district as their departing peers despite having some of their children attend schools in Radnor (and voters should be aware that one of the Republican candidates doesn’t believe in sending her own children to Radnor schools). Nobody I have talked to in the school community had ever heard of these individuals until they decided to run for school board. None of them have held leadership positions in any of the parent-teacher organizations at the schools. A recent review of their Web site leads one to believe that they are more concerned with legislative issues outside the district than actually prescribing tangible solutions in Radnor that we should act upon such as addressing our school finances, our too-high tax rates and refining our curriculum. Is this an indication that they are just as out of touch with local matters as the leaders of their party who have crippled Radnor’s finances on the township level as a result of their inattention to the activities of terminated township manager David Bashore? This inattention to local details and lack of leadership experience has created a problem that Radnor Township is going to have to deal with for some time to come. Radnor voters can’t afford on-the-job training for its new school-board directors. We need experience to return to the school board. We need a change from business as usual.

My family moved to Radnor Township specifically so our children could attend public schools that are defined by educational excellence. We need to put the future of these fine schools in the hands of individuals whose own families have a vested interest in the future of our schools and our students, and who have a proven track record of experience as leaders in our schools. I urge you to vote for Democratic school-board candidates Rob Armstrong, Doug Blazey, Lydia Solomon and Bruce Rapoport on Nov. 3.

Alisa Budin, Rosemont