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Letters to the Editor: Candidates state their case

To the Editor:

I want to give you three reasons to vote for Rob Armstrong for school-board director of Radnor Township on Nov. 3. As an introduction I want to share with you my background and reasons for running.

I graduated from the Wharton School of Business and received a master's degree in communication management from the Annenberg School. I subsequently worked in finance and operations for a company in Philadelphia that bought and sold over 100 radio stations during my tenure there with revenues in excess of \$400 million. After helping to take the company public I "retired."

I have been a stay-at-home father since our first daughter was born. She is now in third grade at Ithan Elementary, and our youngest daughter is in kindergarten. I am in my second year as treasurer of the PTO at Ithan. It was as a direct result of my work as treasurer, and my ability to bring my understanding of business principles and hands-on budget review, that I was asked to speak to the school board as a community member and independent "financial consultant." My proposals were felt to be so helpful I was asked to run for the school board.

One of the first things that struck me during the meetings of the Radnor School Board that I attended was the amount of debt that we are carrying (over \$100 million). One of my first proposals was to consider refinancing this debt. With interest rates at historic lows, now seems the time to pursue this option. There are better ways to manage our finances than merely to tax and spend. With the money we could save by refinancing, we could redirect resources back into the classroom, back to the children, and lower taxes at the same time.

What prompted me to consider running for school board, was the sense of urgency that I feel. I am concerned that our schools are in jeopardy, that we are losing our edge. Most of us moved to Radnor because of its strong school district and reputation. I am concerned that if we don't get our finances in order, we will drift further.

None of us wants to see the quality of our children's education decline while our taxes rise. With a \$3-million projected school-budget deficit for next year, I fear that decisions will be made that will negatively affect class size and teachers' abilities to deliver a superior curriculum. I have proposed a detailed, line-by-line examination of where taxpayer dollars are being spent. The goal would be to move monies in the budget to areas of highest need, and focus expenditures on where they will have the most impact on students.

What prompted me to accept the opportunity to run for school board was the bipartisan group of people who petitioned me to do so. They convinced me that I could uniquely contribute to the school board with my combination of finance and operations background, demonstrated ability to translate that background into budgets for the schools, and allegiance to collaboration and team-building. I am committed to working hard with others to finding the best solutions for our schools, especially in this harsh economy and time of diminishing public funds. All Radnor residents have a stake in the success of the schools but we need to finance our schools in a responsible way, at a cost which is fair and reasonable.

I am joined in my campaign by three other Democratic candidates who offer a breadth of experience and leadership skills to Radnor residents: Brucie Rapoport (incumbent), Lydia Solomon and Doug Blazey. Together we aim to bring about changes to control costs, elevate the quality of our teachers and curriculum, and create a school-board decision-making process which is collaborative, transparent and bipartisan. We can no longer afford to do business as usual.

So why vote for Rob Armstrong for Radnor school-board director? First, you will get a pit bull for fiscal discipline. Second, you will get a team-builder who has a professional track record of getting shared objectives accomplished. Third, you will get someone who has the time, energy and desire to make things better for our schools and our kids. Strong schools make school communities.

I ask for your vote on Nov. 3.

Rob Armstrong, Democratic Radnor School Board Candidate