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School elections: The fix for Lansing controversy

In December, voters in the Lansing Central School District approved the formation of a library taxing jurisdiction by a vote of 686-621. About one month later, some district residents are crying foul. They say the vote was possibly tainted.

As we've written before, elections are the heart and soul of every democracy. Without fair and impartial elections, you have no democracy. And when voters cry foul about elections, the outcomes always remain tainted — whether there is evidence or not to the contrary.

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In Lansing, resident Dan Pace delivered a petition signed by 138 people to the school board on Monday that says unqualified voters participated in the library tax vote. When asked for more specifics from The Journal's Tim Ashmore, Pace said his concerns center on "the way the voting procedure went," but declined to give more information because he is going file an appeal with the state. The Lansing school board did not act on his request and told him to file the appeal.

With the information that has been made public so far, it appears Lansing followed its school district election procedures for the vote. But the heart of this conflict

stems from those procedures. Lansing, like all school districts in the county, besides Ithaca, is not considered a "registered" school district. Voters only need to sign their name next to a district address and affidavit that that they are at least 18 years old and a citizen of the United States. In registered districts like Ithaca, a voter must also be a registered voter in New York state to participate in the election.

Lansing's school board said that it will look into becoming a registered district, but we think the New York Legislature should go one step further. It should require all school districts to become registered districts. While the registered school district voting procedures may not be perfect, they do offer an extra step of security to combat possible election fraud. And even if no fraud does occur, the extra security measures will help voters keep the faith that elections are run in a fair and impartial manner.

N.Y. Presidential Primary Election Letters Deadline

On Tuesday, Feb. 5, voters in the Democratic and Republican parties will head to the polls to select party nominees for president. We invite readers to submit letters to the editor about the primary election. The Journal's election letters policy will govern submissions and publication. To allow for the maximum amount of public debate on this page, the following rules will be strictly enforced:

* Letters must be limited to 250 words. Longer letters will be rejected rather than edited down. No guest columns endorsing a candidate or party on the upcoming election will be accepted,

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including those that criticize parties and candidates. Columns about the election process and other relevant matters related to the election will be considered. All submissions must include the writer's name, current address plus daytime and evening telephone numbers for verification.

* Letters may not contain libel, verifiably false claims of fact, calls for physical violence or needless invective.

* All letters will be published in the order they are received and confirmed.

* Readers are limited to one election letter for the election. Letters submitted and published on other issues will not count against this limit. We reserve the right to publish election letters ahead of letters about other issues as we get closer to the primary.

* Letters regarding the election must reach The Journal by midnight, Sunday, Jan. 27.

All letters will be published by Saturday, Feb. 2. If necessary, letters that cannot fit in the print edition by Feb. 2 will be published on our Web site only. A box will be included on the print page noting the letters available online.


* We routinely receive a high volume of submissions during election cycles. The earlier letters are submitted, the better the chance of being published in The Journal's print edition.

* The preferred method of submission is via an e-mail message sent to ith-letters@ithacajournal.com. Letters can also be mailed to Opinion, The Ithaca Journal, 123 W. State St., Ithaca NY 14850, or dropped off at the same address. For more information, call 274-9213.


* For information on the ballots and voting rules, contact the Tompkins County Board of Elections at www.votetompkins.com or by telephone at 274-5522.

Originally published January 11, 2008

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