

The Sun

LETTERS  
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Hill Staton, Leasure, Gelfman or Smith? More views

In reference to Caitlin Francke's article on the sitting judges on Oct. 15, I would like to get the facts straight on the sentencing of William Scott Marcellino for homicide by motor vehicle, imposed by Judge Lenore Gelfman.

As supervisor for the Drinking Driver Monitor Program in Howard County, this case came across my desk in 1993 before I transferred it to Montgomery County.

Mr. Marcellino was sentenced to four years in the Division of Corrections with all but 18 months suspended to be served in the Howard County Detention Center. After completion of the incarceration, he would be on probation for three years, supervised by the Drinking Driver Monitor Program, a division of Parole and Probation. While on probation, he was to be electronically monitored on home confinement through Jan. 1, 1995 for the holidays. Additionally, he was to complete a 26-week Aftercare Alcohol Program, attend at least two Alcoholics Anonymous meetings per week and give 1,248 hours of community service and report to a monitor once a week. Then later on, once a month. It was stated on the Order for Probation that if the court was persuaded Mr. Marcellino was in violation of any of the conditions of probation that the remainder of the 2 1/2 years could be served at the Division of Corrections.

The reason for 18 months active incarceration was that was the maximum allowable sentence for the Howard County Detention Center where Mr. Marcellino would get adequate alcohol treatment. After being incarcerated, he would be on probation for three years to the court, while completing all the conditions of probation, as stated above, including additional alcohol treatment and restitution to the community by giving 1,248 hours of community service, equaling 156 days or one day per week of the three years of probation.

If Mr. Marcellino was given five years straight time, he could have been out with good time served in approximately 2 1/2 years and that would be that.

I believe that this sentence as good and just, and this is the creative type of sentencing that Judge Gelfman hands down.

It served public safety first and then the rehabilitation of the offender second.

Gordon L. Miller

Ellicott City

The writer is monitor supervisor with the Drinking Driver Monitor Program, Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services.-----

I believe it is unfortunate that the challengers to Howard County's Circuit Court judges have conducted their campaigns by politicizing the process and by focusing on personal attacks.

The upcoming judicial election should focus on whether Judges Diane Leasure and Donna Hill Staton have the integrity, judicial

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temperament and competence to continue as Circuit Court judges. By all accounts, Judges Leasure and Hill Staton are doing an outstanding job in the Circuit Court and should be retained for a full term.

Laura L. Szweda

Ellicott City  
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The Diane Leasure-Donna Hill Staton campaign's new commercial shows a terrifying lack of understanding of our judicial process. The sitting judges attack the competence of Jonathan Scott Smith by declaring him to be "part of the problem" with the judicial system, because he defends people accused of crimes.

Every defense attorney is defending an innocent person, until there is a verdict of guilt. To suggest that Mr. Smith is wrong to defend the accused implies that Judges Leasure and Hill Staton believe that all persons accused of a crime are guilty.

Take away any one leg and justice falls. Defense attorneys are not "part of the problem." They are essential to the fair balancing of justice.

The appointed judges' other campaign commercial "pledges" fair treatment of everyone who comes before them. Do the math. It does not add up.

Hugh Forton

Columbia  
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Judge Diane Leasure's one judgment against a teen-age batterer is enough for me to decide she is not who I want making decisions that affect people's safety.

To say that she was impressed by the teen-ager's college performance presented me with two problems. First, this is a young man with a volatile temper whose offenses were against young people and Judge Leasure is comfortable with him in a setting whereby he is surrounded by young potential victims. Second, would a criminal in a similar situation who cannot attend college be unable then to impress Judge Leasure?

One other judgment upset me, when Judge Leasure reduced the sentence of an Owen Brown Village man who headed a car theft ring. I drive an eight-year-old car because I fear having a new car stolen. I am afraid to shop at Westview Mall. I go to the Mall in Columbia only early on weekdays and only if I can secure front-row parking near an exit. I will no longer go to Chatham Mall unless my husband is with me. I'm plainly tired of living in fear.

The review by The Sun that sentences handed out were in line with what other judges were doing across the state did nothing to alleviate my fears; it only heightened them. Should I fear judicial wrath by airing my views and concerns? The law-abiding segment of the population is just as deserving of fair and impartial judgment as the criminal element.

Marilyn S. Dlugos

Ellicott City  
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Over the last 12 months, two outstanding individuals have worked extremely hard to serve our community as Circuit Court judges, Diane Leasure and Donna Hill Staton.

Unfortunately, what often goes unpublished in newspaper accounts of the judicial campaign is the fact that not only have Judges Leasure and Hill Staton served with distinction, they have dramatically reduced the backlog of Circuit Court cases which existed when they took the bench.

By reducing the backlog which clogged our civil justice system, Judges Leasure and Hill Staton have provided all of us with greater and quicker access to the courts.

I feel that greater emphasis should be placed on what our judges are doing for us, and less emphasis on partisan politics.

Daniel W. Konick

Columbia

Bartlett has nerve; race in 6th needs coverage

I thought I knew what gall was, even if it came from certain politicians. But my congressman, Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, in recent campaign literature, managed to shock me.

Mr. Bartlett has the worst environmental record of any Maryland congressman and one of the worst in Congress. He voted time and time again against our national parks system. He even voted for a study to close the parks. Then he has the audacity to put a picture, on a campaign brochure, of himself with the secretary of the Interior, Bruce Babbitt, who oversees our national park treasures.

Evidently, this representative knows that his voters care about protecting the environment for the future. He just hopes they do not know about his bad record and that he can fool them with a mere picture.

Whose picture should he have used? He should have showed himself with House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who led the charge against the environment in the House of Representatives. Newt led and Roscoe followed.

Nancy Davis

Clarksville

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The Sun seems fascinated with the race for Howard County Circuit judge and has devoted numerous article to it. This, in spite of the fact that this race appears to represent a choice among personalities with very little substance at issue.

In contrast, The Sun has all but ignored the 6th District Congressional race. In this race, important political issues are at stake, including the control of the next Congress. Challenger Steve Crawford is a moderate Democrat who believes in protecting Medicare, the environment, aid to education and a woman's right of choice. At the same time, he believes in fiscal responsibility and attaining a balanced budget.

In contrast, incumbent Roscoe Bartlett is a highly conservative supporter of the Gingrich approach to downsizing government's role in supporting Medicare, the environment and education, while endorsing the Republican platform to increase government's control over our private lives by outlawing abortion through a constitutional amendment.

Come election time, The Sun paternalistically makes editorial recommendations to the voters on how to vote. I would much prefer that it give us ongoing information on the issues so that we can make up our own minds.

Harry Brodie

Fulton

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