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Letters to the Editor

Editor:

While the Acalanes Unified High School District's pest management program has, undoubtedly, improved, recent incidents clearly demonstrate why their pest management policy needs strengthening to truly protect the health of students, staff, and community members.

First, the policy needs to include an Advisory Committee comprised of District staff, parents, students, and public health and environmental representatives. This Committee will be a valuable resource and help the District find effective and safer solutions to its weed and insect problems. The Committee will also provide a source of checks and balances and ensure an appropriate review of a product's contents and adverse health effects before it's used, and people are exposed. We reviewed the District's presentation to the Governing Board on their recommendations for treating weeds on Acalanes' practice field and also the minutes from recent Board meetings where this issue was discussed and the use of a broad leaf weed killer was approved. There was no discussion of the health risks associated with these products. A Committee would ensure product safety is a key part of any discussion.

Second, there need to be Banned and Approved Use Products Lists and a Limited Use Products Provision. There are thousands of very toxic pesticides the District could use and still be in compliance with its current policy. The Banned Products List would include pesticides linked to cancer, birth defects, and other serious health issues.

If the District needed to use a chemical control as a last resort, an Approved Use Products List would contain those truly least toxic products; evaluated by credible scientific bodies for their safety. Currently, no requirement exists that products be evaluated for their potential adverse health effects. Finally, a Limited Use Products Provision would allow District staff to submit a written request to the Advisory Committee for review that a pesticide not on the Approved List be approved for a specific and limited purpose.

Unfortunately, the current policy is inadequate and incomplete. The addition of these provisions is essential to safeguard and protect the health of the District's students and staff and the community.

Carol Shenon
Moraga

Erika Pringsheim-Moore
Lafayette

Susan JunFish
Moraga

Katharine Barrett
Orinda

Editor:

My wife and I enjoyed your article about Ken Murakami and the Moraga Garden Center, honoring Ken and his contribution to our community. He is much more than a businessman - we have been visiting him for many years and hope to continue for many more. He offers great counsel and uses his knowledge about plants as a way to connect to people rather than to connect to people to sell plants. Also, he is a CAL basketball fan. I have promised him a bottle of wine from the backyard grapes he helped me grow. I hope to make good on this promise during my lifetime.

Robert McEwan

Moraga

Editor:

When I was evaluating candidates in the upcoming election, I noticed that Glazer put himself as being very independent of special interests, etc. However, I have since changed my mind. We have been inundated with mailers on a daily basis. I discovered that he has taken significant amounts of money from interest groups that certainly aren't interested in the general good. I wonder about the local leaders who are endorsing him and now have to start wondering about them as well. Perhaps it is time to really sweep everything clean, using the built in term limits, called 'elections'.

Leonard Dorin
Lafayette

Editor:

Allowing people to own guns is not promoting freedom of speech or the freedom to protect one's self but, in fact, promoting fear and the lack of freedom to feel safe. Seldom, do you hear in the media, the use of guns in self defense. More often it is the use of guns to harm and hurt by an aggressor. Because we have the freedom of gun ownership in this country the majority of the citizens live in oppression for fear of the random bullet. Please be our voice to stop gun ownership in the United States. This "constitutional right" was an item at a time when the arms of law enforcement were not as efficiently far reaching as they are today. It is an antiquated constitutional right that needs to be urgently revisited. My plea is not directed at the rifles used for shooting game but at the small and repetitive arms that exist mostly for use in crimes. In America we deserve the right to feel safe "beyond a reasonable doubt". Today our gun culture has failed the citizens of America. We can start this resolution in baby step. Our babies deserve to grow old, to take those giant steps fearlessly and resolutely.

Tina Tankka
Lafayette

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