

To the Editor:

During the summer, Bob Jackson and I invited the Freeholders running for re-election to join us in a series of forums throughout the county. (We are the Democratic Freeholder candidates.) We proposed 14 forums, each in a different municipality, two a week for seven weeks in September and October.

First they ignored us. Then, when pressed by the Press of Atlantic City, they declined. Mr. Thornton said he was too busy, and Mr. Bakley said that one debate is the way it has always been, and that's fine with him.

Bob and I believe that those responses are symbolic of the current Freeholders' attitudes toward public service in general. Mr. Thornton is too busy to talk with people about his plans for the next three year term, and Mr. Bakley doesn't have to make any plans, because the way it has always been is good enough for him.

Somehow, though, Mr. Thornton and Mr. Bakley cleared their busy schedules on September 12 and 13. As reported in the 9/19 Herald, they took part in a photo-opportunity marathon in which they presented giant checks to elected leaders in 15 municipalities--drawn on borrowed funds, to be paid back by future taxpayers--adding up to about \$2 million.

But they don't have time to appear in those same 15 municipalities for even an hour to answer questions from the public on the same stage as us. They imply that the best way to inform the public about their choice of elected officials is through purchased advertising, mailers, photo opportunities – anything but discussing issues in person. And, oh yes, they will debate for one hour in one room in Cape May Court House on October 29. For whoever can make it that night. With four candidates responding to questions, they might have to talk in public for as much as 15 minutes each before the election.

Bob and I believe that the County needs to bring more services to the people, not insist that people come to County Government in Crest Haven. That means flu shot clinics from Woodbine to Wildwood.

Another example is Hurricane Preparedness. If there's any information worth the public's attention, the County should present 15 conferences in 15 municipalities *before* the height of hurricane season, not one photo opportunity conference at the end of September.

One thing is for sure: the people of Cape May County have a real choice this November 6. Same old, same old, or new ideas, new energy, new openness and new accessibility. People can learn more about us at www.bacherjackson.com.

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