

To the Editor:

In the Sept. 20, 2007 *Gazette*, Correspondent Sue Jacobson wrote of substance abuse and violence statistics in the County's schools during 2005-06: Cape May County Special Services, eight substance abuse incidents; Wildwood School District, nine; Lower Cape May Regional, 13; Middle Township, 21. (Ocean City was not included in the article).

Robert Jackson and I, the Democratic candidates for Cape May County Freeholder, have tried to get straight answers from the current Freeholders as to why they fight against fully staffing the County Prosecutor's office. That office both investigates criminal activity and contributes to anti-drug and anti-gang education programs throughout the county.

The Freeholders asserted at their September 25, 2007 meeting that if they gave the Prosecutor the 21 additional staff he requested in 2005, they would have to cut from other areas of county government due to a spending cap. However, when pressed at their October 9 meeting, they would not disclose what exactly had been cut to fund the ten new staff members added since 2005, nor what would have to be cut to fund the full 21 staff members. However, Freeholder Ralph Sheets did raise his voice in response to my questions to say, "I question your sincerity!"

He apparently is unfamiliar with the individuals and families affected by the 51 substance abuse incidents reported in our County's schools during 2005-06. And all the others whose lives have been ruined by the easy availability of drugs in our county. And the many families damaged forever.

Freeholders Bakley and Thornton sat silently while Mr. Sheets yelled his accusations at me.

I question their priorities: what is more important than ridding Cape May County of drugs and gangs? Don't they understand that drugs and gangs ruin lives (and kill real estate values and frighten tourists)?

Are they all so out of touch that they don't understand that the recent drug sweeps, conducted by the Prosecutor's Office, municipal law enforcement and other partners, are just the tip of the iceberg?

Voters will choose between Mr. Jackson and me, and Mr. Thornton and Mr. Bakley, on November 6, 2007. They can publicly question all of us in the single debate the incumbents agreed to on Monday, October 29, at 7 p.m. in the Old Courthouse on Main Street, just north of Mechanic Street, in Cape May Court House. They can learn more about us at www.BacherJackson.com.

As he pointed out during his rant, voters will have to wait another year to pass judgment on Mr. Sheets.

Steve Bacher
Democratic Candidate for Cape May County Freeholder
Cape May Court House