

GUTSY STATEMENT BY NEW DEMOCRATIC SENATOR

GOPAL SUPPORTS TRICITY PLAN TO TRANSFORM RED BANK POLITICS

RED BANK — A political heavyweight just gave his endorsement to an initiative by this newspaper to transform Red Bank's politics to end what's basically a one party state controlled by the local ossified Democratic Party.

Interestingly enough, that political heavyweight is a Democrat — new State Senator Vin Gopal, who says every town should have the non-partisan system we want Red Bank to adopt.

In non-partisan elections, candidates for mayor and council all run in one column without party affiliation. Asbury Park, Long Branch and several other towns in our region use that system. Candidates can group themselves into tickets, or they can run by themselves as independents. They cannot be designated Democrat or Republican.

“Do I support non-partisan in Red Bank? Yes, but I also support it in Middletown,” Gopal said, making the point that Middletown has the same problem, except there it's the Republicans with the one party monopoly. “In fact, I support non-partisan in all towns. It's a better system.”

We've questioned whether Democrat Gopal, the youngest Senator in Trenton at age 32, has the guts to take controversial stands. Give him credit. Less than a month into office, he just took one. No doubt the local Democratic Party politburo in Red Bank — a town he represents — won't be happy to read this article.

Too bad. Gopal told the truth.

And those in Red Bank, who plan to seek to a ballot question asking voters to change to a non-partisan system, will use Gopal's words in this article to show bipartisan support for the switch. (Republicans, of course, are all for it so they can have a fair shot at winning.)

This November, the only Republicans on the six-member borough council — first-termers Mike Whelan and Mark Taylor — face political extinction. On election day, voters in Democratic Red Bank will overwhelmingly be sending a message of disgust to our jackass-in-chief in Washington. They will go straight down the ballot voting Democrat, which is the problem in Red Bank in almost every election for borough council in this Democratic town. It's going to be even more severe

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Senator Vin Gopal

party, offering for a fee to get us there. I'd firmly tell them to go to hell — it absolutely made no sense and would only destroy our business. They thought I was nuts. I thought they were nuts. And I didn't care if all the large media companies were doing it. It was absurd. Why would I allow readers to access the information on line and stop picking up the paper — and thus not see the advertising from advertisers who graciously pay our bills?

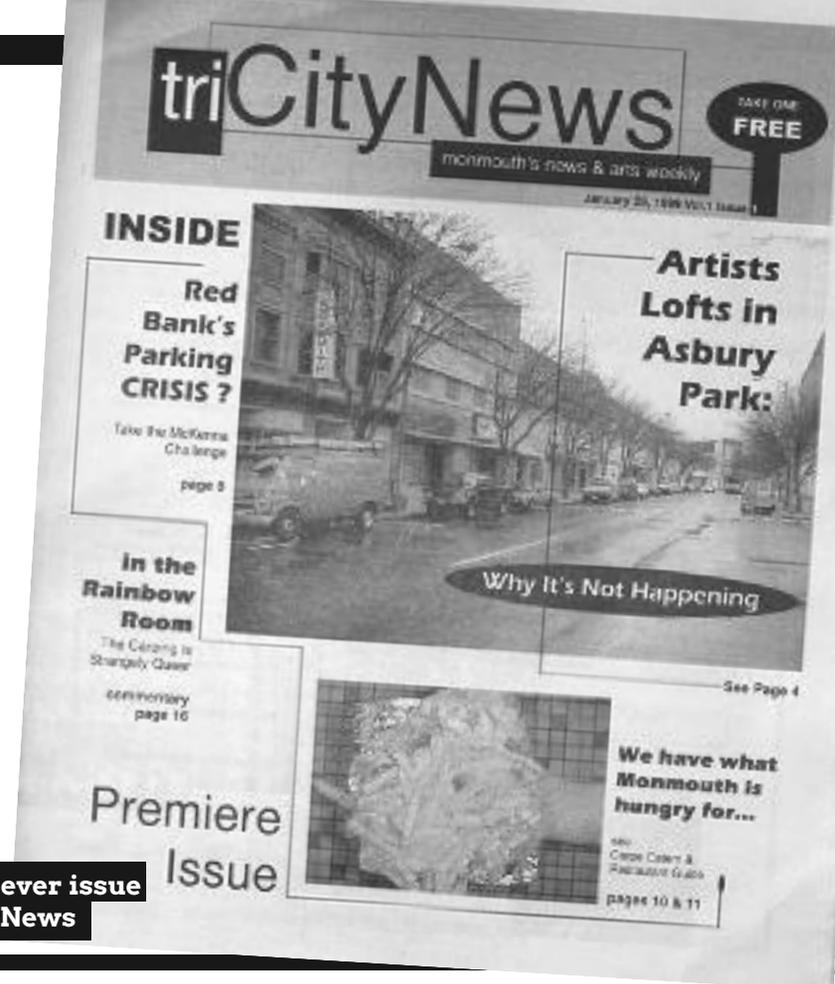
I was right. They were wrong. Meaning everyone. This is the only newspaper that I know that has stayed off line to this day. As a result, our circulation has never gone down. It continues to remain strong for a paper our size. (Approximately 8,500 papers a week.)

Which brings up our second important contrarian move — never changing our ad rates from our first issue 19 year ago. Our ads were affordable then and they're ridiculously affordable now. Meanwhile, our circulation never declined because we refused to cannibalize ourselves by going online. The result is that we're the most cost-effective of any medium, whether online or not, to reach our strong demographic.

Of course, it's always possible that the digital world will catch up with us. And that we'll be done, but satisfied that we had our day in the sun. We'll then get a gig waiting tables, pumping gas or — God help us — practicing law.

But until that time, we'll continue to do what we've been doing for 19 years.

After all, we're the triCityNews. We're here to help.



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of triCityNews**

this year because of disgust with Donald Trump. The election of Republicans Whelan and Taylor three years ago was a bit of a fluke in the first place. Whoever the local Democratic Party nominates to run for mayor or council almost always wins.

And that nomination is controlled by Red Bank Democratic Party Chairman Ed Zipprich, who's also a councilman.

He's also an idiot. And we don't care what your political affiliation, this guy should not be deciding who represents you. If Red Bank voters understand this, they'll vote yes on a ballot question to change to non-partisan elections to allow more competition and to take partisan politics out of the town's government.

But back to that soon-to-be-extinct Republican Councilman Mike Whelan. Along with his fellow Republican Mark Taylor, the two plan to spearhead the petition drive to put that question on the ballot asking Red Bank voters to change to the non-partisan system.

But the town's local politics are absurd and holding it back. The town needs non-partisan elections so that interesting and talented people have a shot at getting elected.

Whelan was ecstatic to hear about Gopal's support. Of course, we turned the tables on this ambitious young Republican who last year unsuccessfully ran for the state Assembly.

We asked Whelan if he agrees with Gopal that all towns, and specifically neighboring Middletown, where his fellow Republicans have a similar death grip on the governing body, should switch to a non-partisan system like he's advocating for Red Bank.

"Yes, absolutely," said Whelan, after hesitating for a moment, no doubt considering how that statement will go over with Middletown Republican leaders across the river in the largest town in Monmouth County — and whose support will be essential for a future countywide run for office by Whelan.

"I agree with Vin that all towns should be non-partisan," Whelan said. "I'd love to run in coalitions with Democrats in Red Bank."

Ah yes. We're bringing Democrats and Republicans together in support of good government reform to switch to non-partisan local elections. Why not? We're the triCityNews. We're here to help.

Especially in the triCity of Red Bank.

Fortunately, there's a vibrant and growing creative community there, which is helping the town fulfill its destiny to become a center for the arts and culture in the region. And by that we mean the northeast.

But the town's local politics are absurd and holding it back. The town needs non-partisan elections so that interesting and talented people have a shot at getting elected. Right now, the only realistic chance requires an endorsement by local party boss Ed Zipprich. Don't even get us started.

We say voters in a referendum will change the system to non-partisan. And that goes for Democrats, Republicans and Independents. The current lack of competition in Red Bank's local races is downright un-American.

A non-partisan system will render Dem party chairman Ed Zipprich powerless, as he should be, and may even cost him his council seat as other more talented Democrats can jump in to challenge him, as they don't need his backing in a non-partisan system, and sane Republicans would have a fair shot at him.

Even better, you can have bipartisan coalitions forming tickets, as Mike Whelan would love to do. So you can actually get people working together for the good of the town, reducing the partisan political maneuvering every year for the elections.

And if some talented newcomer of any political persuasion wants to get elected, he or she doesn't have to wait years to get backed by the local Democratic Party. They just run in the non-partisan election with all the other candidates in the same column on the ballot and take their shot.

Who could possibly have a problem with that?