

Judges well-trained in child law

In a May 6 op-ed column, University of Michigan professors Frank Vandervort and Vivek Sankaran objected to our suggested changes to Michigan's child protection laws, arguing that current laws are adequate because judges already have "broad discretion" in termination of parental rights cases ("Judges have discretion now"). They blame, instead, untrained judges, fear of controversy and poorly paid attorneys for the skyrocketing number of "legal orphans" in Michigan.

But Michigan judges have extensive training and understand the law — more than 97% of termination decisions are upheld on appeal. The risk of controversy is part of a judge's job. And children's lawyers with low pay and high caseloads cannot explain the huge rise in state-created orphans.

We do not ask for our proposals to be accepted uncritically, but don't reject them out of hand.

Maura D. Corrigan

Justice, Michigan Supreme Court

Kenneth L. Tacoma

Chief Judge

Wexford County Probate Court

Adopted apart but close

I agree with J.J. Hitch's viewpoint on siblings being split up in foster care ("Children need help from Congress," May 6). It is a shame that some kids are not taken only from their birth parents, but they are split from siblings who could have been their only comfort.

As hard as it may be to find high-quality foster homes, it is equally difficult to find homes willing to take groups larger than two or three.

My two adopted daughters have two biological brothers who were adopted into a wonderful family. It is a responsibility and a privilege to maintain the relationship between my girls and their brothers, and I look forward to them growing up without the fear of losing each other.

Julie Palmer

Chesterfield Township

Gone-zales!

It is incredible to me that Congress is tolerating the attorney general stonewalling on the White House's role in the Department of Justice firings ("Politics trump law at Justice; Scandals signal Gonzales helped

White House usurp agency's power," May 16). He is concealing the true identity of the people who named the U.S. attorneys to be removed.

Gonzales has allowed partisanship to taint the U.S. Department of Justice. Michigan's representatives and senators should demand his resignation.

Gary M. Maveal

Professor of Law

University of Detroit School of Law

Drug courts need funding

Kudos to the Free Press for support of drug and sobriety courts ("Add drug courts to save funds, repair lives," May 9).

Be aware that the good promise of these courts is at risk. Funding for the courts is mostly for operation and includes little for treatment. That money mostly comes from the already stretched state and federal dollars managed by local Substance Abuse Coordinating Agencies. The message to our legislators: Adequately fund the community treatment services that the courts need to succeed.

John Andrews

Michigan Association of Substance

Abuse Coordinating Agencies

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