

Community Matters

Farewell

By: Patricia A. O'Malley

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This is my 57th and final column. It was too difficult to choose a single topic. My purpose in writing has been to clarify the history, rationale, policies, and procedures surrounding current news issues and events, relating civics to real life. I know. I put a few of my opinions in there, too. Those who know me are not surprised.

I have thoroughly enjoyed researching and writing about local, national, and international topics. I've learned a lot. I truly hope that you enjoyed reading the columns, and that perhaps you've learned a little, too, even if you didn't agree with my opinions. I've met some wonderful people and I thank Jennifer Vertullo and the *51 Corridor* management for this opportunity.

Together, we traveled through a historic presidential election and the start of a new Congress and a new administration. We explored important and controversial topics like the federal budget, the economy, health care, patriotism, torture, and the politics of distraction.

I had planned to write future columns about the South Side Sky, what constables do, Flag Day, the Declaration of Independence, Title IX and the Women's Rights Convention, casinos and property tax relief, corporate welfare, Nobel prizes, plant closing legislation, the credit card bill of rights, government transparency, separation of church and state, the G-20 meeting in Pittsburgh, and the 2010 census.

There are still countless issues to tackle. I get new ideas for topics every day. If you're interested, I'll put a notice on my website when I find a new place for my columns. The "Community Matters" email will remain open for anyone who cares to send a message.

Meanwhile, I hope you'll continue to learn about how the government works. Knowledge is power. You can learn just about anything if you know where to look. I find most of my information online. Every government office has a Web site and there are a dozen good search engines. Every public library in Allegheny County has computers available for public use. My favorite Websites are www.usa.gov, www.infoplease.com, www.constitutionfacts.com, and "The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy" on www.bartleby.com. And don't forget to Google.

Like it or not, your government has a great deal of power over your daily life. With knowledge, you can influence your government. Then you can affect what that power will be. The most important thing is to learn the U.S. Constitution. It only takes about an hour to read it. And it's well worth your time.

By the way, I received some rude and vicious emails calling me a socialist, a liberal, and a terrorist. For the record, I am not a terrorist.

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