

IN MY OPINION

Caroline Porter

Mr. Rogers is in a new neighborhood

We all have to live through the pain of new reporters learning about the town, its people, institutions and characteristics and that applies to new editors, too. The Register-Mail's newest editor, Jeffrey Rogers, wrote a lengthy editorial in the Sunday, August 12 edition, about our States Attorney, Paul Mangieri, paying year-end bonuses to his employees. Rogers doesn't think the word "fraud" ought to be used, as does Republican county board member Steve Johnson. He doesn't think Mangieri did a "terrible thing", but he does worry about the inequality of such action and the public's ability to detect it.

Time for a little background for Mr. Rogers. Consider the following:

1) No one would give a rip about Mangieri's bonuses if he weren't running for Illinois Lieutenant Governor. He is committing the unpardonable sin, running as a Democrat for State office. It's okay with Republicans around here, who are in the majority, if a few Democrats win elective offices in Knox County, but getting into state politics is a vastly different matter. As a former candidate for State Representative, I ought to know. State politics is cutthroat. The careers of men and women are on the line. Obviously the witch hunt directed at Paul Mangieri by the Knox County Republican organization has begun.

2) Other county office holders, both elected and appointed, use their excess budgeted funds one way or the other. This is not a new practice. In addition, many county employees have such piddley incomes they are eligible for food stamps. In my book, there's no way they can be overpaid.

3) If anyone is concerned about unequal pay of county employees, all they have to do is support the AFSCME union in their negotiations with the county board. Equal pay is one of the main issues and Treasurer Carolyn Griffith seems to be at the forefront of this assault. One doesn't have to be privy to the private negotiations to know she has



fought tooth and nail against resolution with the union. She has made her position public for some time. At the same time, she and other detractors on the negotiating committee benefit from the union memberships of their spouses.

4) Republican county board member Steve Johnson is a disgruntled loser of the last Sheriff's race and I suspect he has a personal agenda that doesn't always include what's best for the county.

There are eight elected officers and nine appointed department administrators in Knox County. Each year elected officials submit their proposed budgets to the county board and they are given a total amount within which they should operate. How they spend that amount is at their discretion.

But hey, we know this would not be a subject of discussion or editorials at all if States Attorney Paul Mangieri, a Democrat, weren't a candidate for Illinois Lieutenant Governor.

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