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Tazewell County Board

*Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service*

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## **May Adventure Sports Outdoors Column Professionals are Always Needed**

*"No man undertakes a trade he has not learned, even the meanest; yet everyone thinks himself sufficiently qualified for the hardest of all trades - that of government."*

- Socrates

A fellow elected official and I were discussing a local hot-button issue the other day when he said something that exemplifies a current disturbing trend I have seen developing the past several years concerning elected officials.

The local issue we were discussing is of no real concern to this discussion, but let me just say that it involves the County Board appointing some of its responsibilities to another board that is made up of appointed rather than elected officials. My issue with this action is that individuals that are not elected and vented by the public now make the decision. The public voted and elected County Board Members to make these decisions, not to pass the responsibility to other individuals.

My colleague on the other hand was happy with the change because "it takes the politics out of the decision." "I am not a politician", he pointed out. His comments show the current distrust and misunderstanding of the professionals in politics and this is what I want to discuss here.

Now I am sure that most of you have no problem with these comments and are wondering what my issue is. You have read in previous columns I have written of the need to get more common sense and diversity in politics. I still believe that we need government to have just as many teachers as we have lawyers, just as many farmers as we have doctors, just as many hard working factory workers as we have professional politicians involved in politics to make the system work. The key here is we do need some professional politicians.

And my larger concern with his comments and mentality is the dishonesty in the second part of the statement. "I am not a politician." This is completely false. As soon as you decide to run for an elected office and definitely as soon as you are elected to public office, you are a politician. Your full time job may be an architect, or a farmer, or a factory worker, but you are now also a politician.

Would you want to go to a doctor that when you get in his office says, "Don't worry, I am not a real doctor"? Of course not. Maybe we should have your cousin Billy who has no mechanical training work on your car instead of taking it to a mechanic. Or how about we start having city slickers that have never even touched soil before in charge of growing our corn crops. Okay, I would love to see the results of that last one, but I really don't think it would work out. We need professionals to do these important jobs. We need individuals that are skilled at what they do and have the talent to get the job done properly.

This is not to say that we need organizations of just politicians; that gets back to my statement above about diversity. We need organizations that have farmers, doctors, lawyers, teachers, factory workers and, yes, even a good mix of professional politicians to make the system work the way the founders envisioned it working.

I completely understand why my colleague made the statement; he wants to appear above the pettiness and political party infighting that I believe has driven to many good individuals away from serving. But we are not going to fix this issue by falsely claiming to not be part of it. We need to elect and work with individuals that get in these organizations and do the right thing. We need individuals that bring pride to the profession and show us what is possible when the right individuals stand up and be heard.

To end this, I want to leave you with a thought and a quote. The thought first: I truly believe that the best way to gain knowledge of a subject is to work at it for a number of years. As you go, you find what works, what does not work, and the secrets of that trade to be able to make it function in the best possible manor. The people who know their trade the best are those that have had great success but also great failure that they had to learn from and fix in order to become successful again. With this thought, here is my closing quote:

*"A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives."*

- James Madison, 1822

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