

To the Editor:

Few observers have not heard of the term “political football” wherein opposing parties endlessly leave matters up in the air in order to gain a seeming upper hand. Less often does one hear of political bullying. And while the topic of school yard and gender bullying have become part of the current discourse, the political variety of much the same sort of browbeating and intimidation is alive and well in many local jurisdictions. Such bullying has often been excused, and even justified under the rubric of carrying the banner for one’s political party. But no amount of bullying ought to be excused. Those who are elected should always put negotiation, responsibility and accountability above any temptation to bluster and hector. There can never be any justification for bullying since its purpose is to vilify rather than to enter into the public’s larger interests. Slash and burn stratagems of a Karl Rove must never be taken as a right. There are necessary diplomacies inherent in exercising just and compassionate concerns for the electorate. The challenge of leadership is to be strong and balanced without trying to browbeat one’s opponents into submission. Particularly on a local level, it becomes essential for the public to more fully witness the deliberations of those they’ve elected to represent their best interests. Political bullying appears to happen when there are too few eyewitnesses to the process of government at work. Democracy comes into being when citizens of any jurisdiction learn to appreciate their roles in attending to the discussions and debates of their lawmakers. We each of us have an obligation to make our presences felt in local village, city and town councils. Only by such becoming witnesses to these deliberations can we have any say in combating the wraths of present or potential political bullying.

Dr. E. Mark Stern  
Town of Stanford

297 Market Lane, Clinton Corners, NY 12514, (845) 266-5646