

District Attorney Candidate Mike Diederich's Statement to Haverstraw Democratic Committee

I'm Mike Diederich, a North Rocklander, an employment and civil rights lawyer, and a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Army JAG Corps. As you may recall, I was the Democratic Party's candidate for District Attorney in 2003, when I ran against Republican incumbent Michael Bongiorno.

I am running again, because no other candidate is addressing the most significant problem facing the County today, namely the insularity and exponential growth of the Hasidic community.

I find it reprehensible—indeed, criminal—that many children in the Hasidic community do not receive the basic education needed to become good, contributing American citizens. Every child born in the United States should have an education well-grounded in American and World history, in science and mathematics, and in the principles of Democracy that America's Founding Fathers' envisioned.

As to the Hasidic community, many people are perplexed when they look at New Square, Kaser, Monsey, and people become scared when they read about lawsuits against Airmont and Pomona. Many Rockland residents are saying that that they will move out of the County as the Hasidic community expands. Wrong answer! The correct answer is to compel what the N.Y.S. Education Law requires—a sound secular education for all Hasidic children. An education grounded in American values of pluralism, patriotism, cooperation, civic responsibility, and being educated about the important public issues of the day. Sound education of children, not avoidance and flight by adults, is the key to Rockland's future and its prosperity.

As District Attorney, I will fight to protect Hasidic children from being intellectual prisoners of the Hasidic leadership. Teach the Torah. But the Hasidic yeshivas must also teach History, Literature, Biology, Sex Education, Civics, Race Relations, Ethnic and Religious Diversity and the Bill of Rights. American democracy needs individuals to vote in an informed, educated manner. Not "block voting." No candidate for District Attorney should seek the block vote.

Children who are denied a basic education are confined in an intellectual cage. Like a physical cage, this is abuse. It is the criminal offense of endangering the welfare of the child. I will prosecute such crime, in the Ramapo Justice Courts, before a mostly or entirely Jewish jury. And I will win, ask the court to slap a fine on the yeshiva's administrators, and then seek to close the deficient school. My goal is to protect the children. They have the right to be educated. Government must protect them.

If a Hasidic man or woman seeks a better education for their children, perhaps in the public schools, and are shunned and ostracized by the Hasidic leadership for this, I will prosecute that too, as it may amount to the crime of criminal harassment or criminal coercion. Racketeering under the guise of religion must stop.

I will wield the sword of the prosecutor to protect Hasidic women and children against a Hasidic leadership that seeks authoritarian control over its members. I will protect individuals, and fight organizational abusers. The Hasidic leadership is an abusive organization when it comes to keeping its members inadequately educated and isolated from the larger American society. The Hasidic leadership's views are tribal. Tribalism is destructive to democracy. I've learned this as a civil rights lawyer, from traveling around the world, and from being in war zones.

Let me be clear: there is much that is good and admirable in the Hasidic community. I will protect Hasidics and their families, and prosecute anti-Semitism and hate crimes. I seek only to fight what is destructive to Hasidic children and American society. A grossly insufficient secular education irreparably injures the child and threatens our democracy.

As District Attorney, I will seek justice, and act with fairness. I will fight corruption and protect people. These are the same things I ran on when I was your District Attorney candidate in 2003. The only difference now is that I have 16 more years of experience, with tours of active military duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, where I was awarded a Bronze Star Medal. Since 2003, I have also twice influenced the U.S. Supreme Court in the public interest, and fought many civil rights battles in the federal courts.

In sum, I am the only candidate addressing the most important criminal justice issue facing Rockland County—the criminally deficient non-education of Hasidic children in this

County, and panoply of problems that result. I have the trial and appellate experience needed for the job of District Attorney, and a military background that demonstrates my commitment to our Constitution and our democracy. I request your support. Thank you.

MIKE DIEDERICH, JR.

Candidate for Rockland District Attorney