

By BRIAN ACKLEY
WIN Columnist

The disingenuity meter has been getting quite a workout around these parts lately. In fact, it's blown through the right end of the dial.

First came election post mortems, whipped together frantically before the confetti could be swept up from the Rich Renaissance Center floor. The adjectives flowed as freely as Giambra campaign dollars. "Decisive" and "emphatic" were among the characterizations of the county executive's win.

Come again?

Giambra's win was notable, but hardly decisive given the context of the election. From powers of incumbency to 20 television commercials for every one for Dan Ward, Giambra enjoyed sky-scraper sized advantages. A ten-percentage point win, when most political factors are largely even, is spectacular. This barely moved off solid.

Four years ago, facing the same solid obstacle over which he of course had to hurdle this time – lopsided party enrollment – Giambra beat a Democrat *and* an incumbent by a bigger percentage. So it was a little tough to swallow when print and broadcast reports blindly followed the notion that this win was some kind of landslide. Well, happily, at least nobody that we know of used *that* word.

"I agree with your intuition, we could have expected him to win by more," said Hilbert College Professor of Political Science Christopher Holoman. "Giambra does have a lot of built in advantages. I don't think of it as a crushing victory. Dan Ward did pretty well. If I were him, I'd be pleased."

The reason, of course, that the Giambra win was perceived as something akin to dropping napalm on an ant, is rooted in one of the game's most tried and true adages.

"In politics, it's all about expectations," Holoman added. "In three months we have the New Hampshire primaries, and the press will tell us who is supposed to win."

Giambra was supposed to win, and big. It may in the end be apropos of nothing that his margin of victory was smaller than expected. Those around him still insist that he will serve one more term and move on. But, the window of opportunity seems already small, at least for a serious state-wide bid. Giambra himself threw at least a handful of cold water on that notion a grand total of one day after the "momentous" win, saying he was going to "resign himself to staying county executive." Somehow, his choice of words hardly conjured images of handsprings and giddiness at the Rath Building. He wouldn't be the first politician to decide the paycheck was still worth the trouble.

Speaking of which, if the largely misguided election analysis didn't strain the seams of credibility, then maybe it was the perception of the big win which emboldened county officials to start rattling their tin cups less than two weeks after the vote, hoping for fatter paychecks and bigger pensions.

File it under one more example of how elected officials – Democrats, Republicans, they could be Whigs and Federalists for all voters apparently care – earn their blood sucking labels. Did any of these disconnected public servants happen to notice people in Buffalo will have to pay 33 percent more next year for the privilege of turning on their spigots? We'd say the City of Buffalo is drowning, but apparently people aren't using enough water to make that so.

Spare us. There are no new arguments. Why bother even hiding behind a citizen's salary review board, which we can predict with great confidence and foresight will undoubtedly, among a whole host of trite arguments, play the 'how-do-we-get-quality-people-if-we-don't-pay-them-enough' card. If you want, just go ahead and take it. We as your employers will undoubtedly sign it over to you without so much as a sigh.

For those who's gall, and bank accounts, apparently knows no bounds, we offer something that is emphatic and decisive. No.

(Brian Ackley is a columnist for the Weekly Independent Newspapers (WIN) of Western New York. WIN is a consortium of 19 community newspapers in Erie and Niagara counties with a paid weekly circulation of 75,000 homes, providing collaborative advertising and editorial support for member publications. For more information on WIN, or to provide feedback on this column, visit our website at www.wnynewspapers.com. Opinions expressed here are those of the author.)