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Give progressive radio a chance in Cincinnati

BY JERRY BAKER

Last month the Center for American Progress published a report confirming what many progressive radio listeners already knew: There are nine hours of conservative talk radio for every one hour of progressive talk on the public airwaves. Conservative talkers and Republicans in Congress began screaming that the Democrats were trying to take right-wing talkers off the air. They claimed the report was advocating a return to the Fairness Doctrine, a long-repealed requirement for equal time on the airwaves. Both claims are blatantly false.

Progressive talk listeners are simply asking for an equal opportunity to present progressive views on the airwaves. Residents of Southwest Ohio who wanted to listen to this format got only a brief chance to do so when it was carried by WCKY, then moved over to the weaker signal on WSAI. Ratings weren't great, but the stations were poorly managed and poorly promoted.

When listeners like me complained, the Clear Channel program manager ignored us. Right-wing talkers on Clear Channel's WLW openly campaigned to kill the format on their own sister station.

What progressive talk-radio listeners *are* advocating is recognition that the public airwaves are owned by the people and are not a corporate birthright.

We propose reinstating a limit to the number of stations that can be owned by corporations like Clear Channel to return real competition to the marketplace. Shorten the time between license renewals back to three years, and allow public comment each time the renewal is applied for. Then listeners get a real chance to voice their desires.

Conservative talkers claim the marketplace is driving the disparity in talk radio. That's false; it's the political ideology of ownership and their corporate advertisers driving the agenda.

The radio airwaves belong to the public. Give progressive talk the same opportunity the conservatives have - strong signals, good management and proper promotion - and it will have an audience, even here in Cincinnati.

Jerry Baker of Evendale is an engineer and sales director for GE Aviation, and is also a precinct captain for the Democratic Party.

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