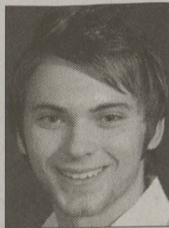


## Running Limbaugh off the air

### Liberal attempts at removing Rush from Armed Forces Radio unreasonable

There's a golden rule that governs the rules of engagement for the eternal American media battle: Do unto others so that they cannot get up and do it again.



CLINT RAINEY

As to which side is officially responsible for adding it to the rulebook, no one can conclusively say. But, if one is curious as to which side has taken it to new lows, the answer is found to the left.

Liberal outcries about talk radio bias have found a curious new home: U.S. senator Tom Harkin, a Democrat from Iowa. He is trying to amend the 2005 Defense Appropriations Bill, which, among other things, determines military funding to the Armed Forces Radio and Television Services for the next fiscal year, to make the bill a low blow to conservative radio.

Sen. Harkin believes that since the Armed Forces Radio is "funded by taxpayers of all political persuasions," it should "make a greater effort to provide balanced representation of political viewpoints on its airwaves to American service members around the world." Right now it does not, he says, and he thinks this is a problem.

And he would be right if he had stopped there, but Sen. Harkin is a partisan man, therefore the issue quickly scored liberals a shot way below the belt.

Where did it turn? It turns with his "answer" to the problem he just created: Give Rush Limbaugh, a political commentator and ring-wing crusader featured on AFR, the boot.

It's difficult to follow the thought patterns of men like Sen. Harkin, Al Franken, David Brock and the other liberal supporters of this amendment; they seem contradictory and illogical, littered with half-truths and distortion. Hopefully, the average American sees through this and can put this simple two-piece puzzle together: It's been the lifelong fantasy of these men to see Rush Limbaugh off the radio. They're desperate and they see a chance to make it happen if they play by the new golden rule.

But — bad for them, good for the nation — there is a litany of logistical problems with this plan, not the least of which is that such an amendment would require a complete abrogation of First Amendment rights by the federal government. Fortunately, this issue is an impregnable barrier that isn't going to give way for such an amendment, but it is certainly noteworthy to anyone interested in freedom

and rights that the liberals tried anyway. Their thoughts are frightening: "Hey guys, it's OK. We tried to play unfair. It's just free speech and those horribly unfair unalienable rights. Curse them!"

So take comfort in the fact that the plan will be foiled, but be concerned about the underlying foolishness of it, which, for the sake of this country, needs to be exposed.

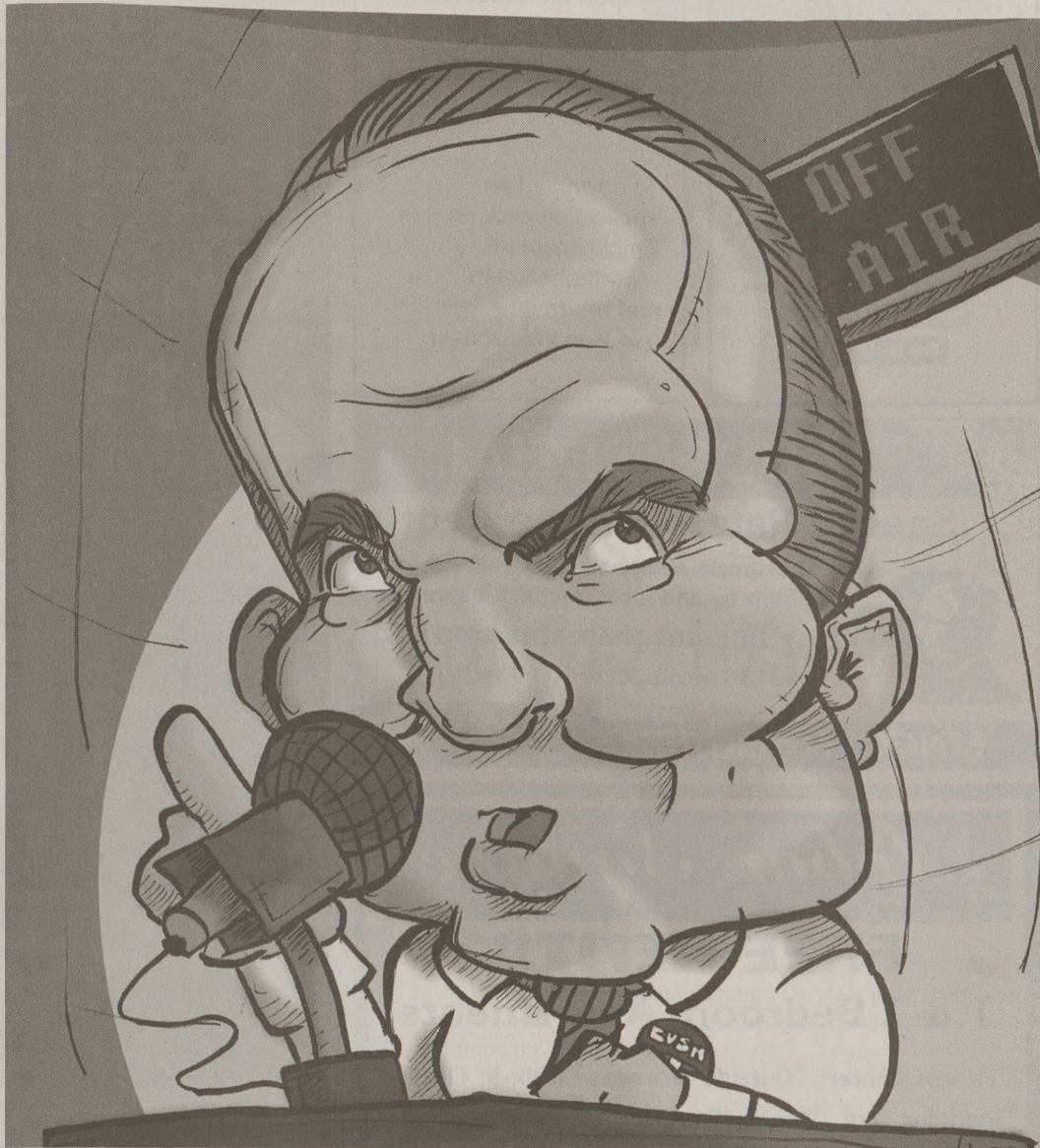
The attempt to entice the federal government to censor its citizens poses a serious misunderstanding, or blatant disregard, for the laws and freedoms of America, but it's just the first bend in this labyrinth that maps these liberals' thought patterns. For it is likely Sen. Harkin knows the unconstitutionality of his amendment; the uneasiness should come in listening to the justifications offered by the liberals who support it.

It's not difficult to see where one could get off putting the moniker of "unbalanced" on Rush Limbaugh, but to then pass that branding iron right over individuals such as Diane Rehm and Dan Rather is rather disturbing. It's even more disturbing to see someone accuse the AFR as a whole of being biased.

There is no factuality to attest to this at all. Consulting the weekly master schedule for AFR, available on their Web site, one sees that the notoriously liberal National Public Radio alone occupies ten hours per week, which is five more hours than Rush Limbaugh. Now, throw in other liberal notables like Dave Ross, Diane Rehm, Bill Schneider and Dan Rather and the total grows horribly disproportionate. Even combining the short segments of conservatives like Paul Harvey or Dave Ramsey yields numbers that are immaterial; no matter how the hours are added, the liberals come out ahead.

This whole premise of counting time by ideological lean becomes ridiculous when one considers that AFR has over 1,100 different radio programs. This is why Sen. Harkin is not really serious about making AFR "balanced." If he were, he'd have to identify the political ideology of over 1,100 hosts and commentators! What about Jim Rome? He gets 54 minutes per day; maybe Sen. Harkin should ask him if he is pro-life or pro-choice so he can be added to the appropriate list.

When both the "liberal" and the "conservative" programming are combined, they are only a small fraction of the available programming, which features sports, cooking and car shows in the array. This is because the intention of AFR was never political in nature. It is meant to be a representation of what Americans are listening to — a broad swath of everything. The Rush Limbaugh Show is



the most popular of its kind on the radio; for the AFR to have talk radio without it would be like having a sports show without covering the NBA Finals or the Super Bowl.

Honestly, this broad-swath nature of AFR probably explains what NPR and the rest of the liberal gamut are even doing on there in the first place, since the military shows a greater conservative lean collectively than the country as a whole.

One thing is clear: The liberals in the realm of radio feel threatened. Why? Because people want to hear Rush Limbaugh. He supports the troops. He tells the soldiers overseas what the

liberals want hidden in a dusty closet somewhere. Liberals don't do these things, and it's their tactics that put freedom in jeopardy. They say that it is fairness and balance that they really want, but inside they still yearn for a chance to play by the golden rule of the American media.

Clint Rainey is a sophomore general studies major. Graphic by Will Lloyd

### MAIL CALL

#### Bush supporters should go see Fahrenheit 9/11, too

I feel I must offer up some type of explanation why I, a staunch conservative and Republican, would go and pay money to see "Fahrenheit 9/11," Michael Moore's latest piece of garbage targeted at President Bush. The reason is simply this. If we, the God-fearing, morally bound component of the United States, don't want to wake up November 3 and here the words "President Elect John F. Kerry," we have got to WAKE UP NOW and realize what we are up against!

Having said that let me get to the film. First of all, calling this thing a documentary is an absolute sham. By definition, a documentary is a film which "presents facts objectively without editorializing or inserting fictional matter." Moore's work is one fallacious attempt after another to discredit what President Bush has done for this country. One of Moore's main accusations is President Bush's relationship with the Saudis led to the evacuation of approximately twenty-four Saudis including relatives of Osama bin Laden only days after September 11. Another avid Bush critic, Richard Clarke, has proven this accusation false.

Moore's repeated attempts to bring discredit to the U.S. military were also unrealistic. He interviewed a few of the not so bright, junior troops in an effort to make all seem like blood thirsty, war-mongering buffoons. The film also makes the notion that the majority of the troops are against President Bush. In reality, this is the exact opposite of the truth. A recent poll taken by the Military Times shows an overwhelming majority of members of the United States' armed forces support President Bush and believe in his leadership.

Michael Moore is an extremist who will go to any length, including telling lies, to further his cause.

Andy Thaxton  
Class of 2006

#### John Kerry nothing more than an opportunist

In response to Jeff Lack's June 24 Mail call:

Mr. Lack, it is very disturbing how anyone with a military background would support Sen. John Kerry; a politician who stands for everything that is wrong with America today. I respect your service to our country and respect all of our soldiers fighting today. At the same time I think it is appropriate to look at John Kerry's "service" to America.

Though Kerry was in the Vietnam War, he did nothing but hinder its efforts. Many American POWs were tortured and died in the Hanoi prison camps while Kerry sat back and watched them and chose the opportunist path of least resistance.

John Kerry has continued to change his views on many other issues since then. His "flip-flopping" on issues and his disgusting voting record is more than just a slander on his character; it is a tremendous factor in any presidency. Many Americans will vote for him for where he stands on certain issues today only to see him change his mind in the future. Inconsistency such as that is very dangerous to our country.

Josh Haynes  
Class of 2005

## Universities should use direct-loan plan

Though many Aggies look forward to their graduations, often their anticipation is overshadowed by the student loan payments that will be due soon afterwards. The financial burden of loan payments will be difficult to handle for many students, and unfortunately neither the government nor the multi-billion dollar privatized student loan industry are going to make it any easier. There is corruption in the student loan system and it needs to be changed.

The most common way of borrowing money for higher education is from federal programs like the Stafford loan program. Because of major flaws in federal law, universities are able to choose whether to get federally guaranteed loans from the Federal Family Education Loan Program or from the government's direct-loan plan. Against students' best interests, universities across the country have chosen the profits of privatized loans over the more beneficial direct-loan loan plan.

The direct loan plan began in 1998 when Congress reformed the Higher Education Act and allowed the government to cut out private lenders from the flow of money from government to student. With the government doing the lending, the middleman is eliminated, and the government prevents itself from paying the lenders subsidies that are normally paid for with taxpayer money. Unfortunately for students, universities aren't tak-



KRISTINA BUTLER

ing advantage of the opportunity.

Federal government figures show that for every \$100 the government directly lends to the student, it earns 22 cents, but FFEL costs \$12.80 for every \$100 borrowed. The numbers speak for themselves, but universities ignore common sense and blindly pursue the more expensive of the two options.

Although some public officials push the direct-loan plan, the privatized industry has worked very hard to keep its supporters.

Private lenders, most notably Sallie Mae who is the giant of the private student loan industry, have gone to great lengths to regain ground lost to the direct-loan plan, and they have used some very dirty tricks to do it.

Private lenders use the proceeds from federal loans to wine and dine financial loan officers from universities as well as offer millions of dollars in profits from federally guaranteed loans to universities by setting up the schools as banks. Although it is legal, that doesn't reduce the immorality of it, especially at a time when tuition is skyrocketing across the country.

According to a special report in October from U.S. News & World Report, private lenders spend millions to keep key legislators on the House and Senate education committees in office and then spend more money to lobby to them. Apparently, their

profits make the effort well worth it. This lobbying and political game playing comes at a great cost to students, who are left without anyone lobbying for them.

Private lenders have also found a loophole in federal law that requires the government to pay a premium on top of the interest the students are paying, costing the taxpayer over \$432 billion dollars a year. In essence, they are charging the government money to do something that would cost the government less to do itself. Private lenders have gone untouched for too long, and must be subject to stricter standards.

Another issue regarding student loans needs to be addressed. Federal law prevents those deep in debt to consolidate their student loan bills more than once, and with very few exceptions. Students at A&M can accrue significant debt while enrolled as an undergraduate, but for those who attend graduate school as well the debt becomes almost unmanageable. The bills that start pouring in and from different lenders can be overwhelming once graduation has passed.

Kristina Butler is a senior journalism major.



The Battalion encourages letters to the editor. Letters must be 200 words or less and include the author's name, class and phone number. The opinion editor reserves the right to edit letters for length, style and accuracy. Letters may be submitted in person at 014 Reed McDonald with a valid student ID. Fax: (979) 845-2647 Email: mailcall@thebattalion.net