

## Save NPR!

October 27, 2010 by [Sven Wilson](#)

I know. I know. NPR is a bastion of welfare-state liberalism. True enough. I hate the politics of most NPR contributors, staff, and editors as much as anyone.



Still, I love NPR. What's more I think conservatives and libertarians should fight to save NPR. If you made a list of the dumbest things done by smart people, NPR's recent firing of Juan Williams has to certainly be near the top of the list. Wrong on the merits. Wrong on the strategy. (Or maybe NPR has a weird management strategy where the really dumb people get left with the important decisions like the rapid firing of Williams before taking the time to rub two of their brain cells to figure out how ridiculous this is—you know the people who do the pledge drive and the only thing they can think of to say is the phone number over and over. Those people.)

Here is why conservatives and libertarians should preserve NPR and not listen to all the rabble that talk about killing it: It is really the *only* good place to hear conservative and libertarian positions on the radio. The print media and the web are full of lots of thoughtful people. But radio? It is almost entirely a wasteland, which is sad because radio is really the only media form that allows one to multi-task and do other things, like have a life (as opposed to blog reading, for example!)

Sure, they don't give the Right equal time; they are condescending; they are godless; they are snobs and elitists; they can barely keep their biases and left-wing politics hidden beneath the facade. I don't care. They make damn good radio. In fact, the only radio really worth listening to.

Leftists talk about how they don't have a good option to all the conservative talk radio, which they try to suppress through government action by advocating outrageous policies like the Fairness Doctrine. Give me a break. The left has NPR and the whole network media enterprise on their side. The real issue is that *conservatives* don't have a good option to NPR. My local affiliate recently did an hour long conversation with David Boaz. It was thoughtful and balanced and featured a prominent libertarian intellectual. When has Glenn Beck or Rush Limbaugh done a thoughtful hour of programming on....well...anything? Seriously, crying on air with a flag rippling in the background doesn't make what you are saying meaningful, or even patriotic for that matter.

Most of what comes over NPR airwaves isn't that political. It is just interesting and engaging (most of the time). And they at least do a passable job at trying to bring in varying opinions, even if it is obvious they don't respect them. Almost all the intelligent commentary I have heard over the airwaves over the years has come from NPR. I still recall an NPR reporter in Chicago trying to take on the brilliant, libertarian legal scholar Richard Epstein. Even though that was a hilarious mismatch, can you imagine Limbaugh having an intelligent conversation with Epstein—well he might, as long as he let Epstein do all the talking (which he wouldn't do, because the main problem with these conservative radio jocks is that they love to hear their own silly voices).

The right still hasn't recovered from the loss of it's intellectual godfather, Bill Buckley. As long as NPR continues to talk with people on the right and the left and give them their say, I say let them flourish. If they were forced to go private, they would probably become much more liberal and less intelligent. Do we really need more Olbermans?

Jonah Goldberg [argues](#) that even though he doesn't think they deserve public funding, the Republicans would be stupid to try to take this on as an issue because it would backfire and only give Democrats ammunition in the culture war. I would add that federal funding for NPR is a pittance. There are so many more worthwhile targets for libertarian disgust than NPR. Find one and shoot at it instead!

[I would also add that my spouse, who is a fairly conservative, stay-at-home mom, listens to NPR frequently and, as a result, knows a huge amount of interesting stuff. I get great external benefits from this, since I don't get to listen all that much myself, but I get to talk with her. You should all be so lucky!]