

Monday, August 17, 2009

Hot Button

[Amanda Carpenter](#)

The Pitt platform

The hunky movie star Brad Pitt has joked any efforts to draft him to run for mayor of New Orleans would be derailed by his "gay marriage, no religion, legalization and taxation of marijuana" platform. He shared more of his thoughts on marriage and religion with HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher" on Friday evening.

Mr. Pitt suggested in his HBO sit-down that the right for same-sex couples to marry was rooted in our nation's values of religious freedom. "You really have to check what country you're living in because the freedom that allows you to practice religion is the same freedom you're stepping on," Mr. Pitt said.



In addition to doing charity work in New Orleans to help rebuild the region after Hurricane Katrina, Mr. Pitt and his longtime girlfriend Angelina Jolie are activists for gay marriage. In 2006, they made a public pledge not to marry until gay marriage became legal everywhere in the U.S.

Diversity czar

The White House says it doesn't support the reinstatement of the Fairness Doctrine, an old law that required broadcasters to provide opposing points of view on their programs.

But many Democrats, including President Obama and the Federal Communications Commission's new "diversity czar," support measures Republicans say are a "backdoor" way of bringing the policy back.

Mr. Obama appointed Mark Lloyd - a former scholar at the left-leaning Center for American Progress,

who has studied and written about regulating talk radio in order to better serve public interest - to become chief diversity officer to the FCC.

As a senator, Mr. Obama wrote a letter to the FCC in 2007 advocating for increased minority ownership in print and broadcast media, something Mr. Lloyd discussed in a 2007 CAP study he co-authored titled, "The Structural Imbalance of Political Talk Radio." The paper called attention to the gap between conservative and liberal talk radio and blamed the imbalance on a lack of government regulations in the radio market.

To amend the perceived problem, the authors argued in favor of concepts called "ownership diversity" and "localism" that require government action to put more women and minorities, who are more likely to be liberal, on independently-owned stations to balance out stations controlled by group owners, who are more likely to put male, conservative hosts on the air.

The researchers also proposed putting caps on the ownership of commercial radio stations, giving local authorities more control over radio licensing and requiring commercial owners "who fail to abide by enforceable public interest obligations" to pay a fine that would go toward public broadcasting.

Sen. Charles E. Grassley, Iowa Republican, sent a letter to FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski on Friday saying that while Mr. Lloyd has said he does not support the Fairness Doctrine, implementing the proposals laid out in the 2007 paper would effectively do just that.

"I am concerned that despite his statements that the Fairness Doctrine is unnecessary, Mr. Lloyd supports a backdoor method of furthering the goals of the Fairness Doctrine by other means," Mr. Grassley wrote.

In light of Mr. Lloyd's appointment, the Iowa senator is asking the FCC go on the record with their opposition to "any reincarnation to the Fairness Doctrine" and to "to affirmatively state that you will not pursue an agenda that includes any new restrictions, fines, fees, or licensing requirements on commercial radio that would effectively create a backdoor Fairness Doctrine."

Artist death

A funeral service is planned Monday for a noted local artist, humanities teacher and the wife of one of the world's most noted Catholic theologians.

Karen Laub-Novak, who died Tuesday, produced several series of lithographs on famous texts: 17 on the Apocalypse, six on T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday," six on the Book of Genesis and eight on Rainer Maria Rilke's "Duino Elegies."

In a lecture, she described herself as "not an Eternal Feminine type, a suffragette, or a warrior of the Woman's Liberation Front. The two questions for me are: what makes a creative person, and how can all people share in the creative process."

She also taught art and humanities locally at Georgetown University and Mount Vernon College, and at Stanford University, Syracuse University and elsewhere. Her works, which also included sculptures and paintings and mostly is in private collectors' hands, were the subject of many one-person shows in the U.S.

Mrs. Laub-Novak's funeral service will be held at 11 a.m. Monday at the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Northwest Washington. She is survived by her husband Michael Novak, three children - Richard, Tanya, and Jana - and four grandchildren.

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