

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PUBLIC-FUNDED RADIO AND TELEVISION

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I have been around Congress a few years. When I served in the House of Representatives 16 years ago, the Republicans won control of Congress for the first time in 40 years. They promised to change how business was done in Washington and they elected Newt Gingrich of Georgia as Speaker of the House. On his first day on the job, Speaker Gingrich addressed a black tie dinner of happy supporters and took aim at an enemy he said was undermining America's values, and that enemy was Big Bird.

Newt Gingrich denounced public broadcasting as a sandbox for the rich and he condemned it for "eating taxpayers' money." He went on to say: "They are simply enclaves of the left using your money to propagandize your children against your values."

Once the Gingrich Republican revolutionaries finished passing their so-called Contract With America, Gingrich vowed he would do everything in his power to do away with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, National Public Radio, and the Public Broadcasting Stations. Fortunately, in the Republican and Democratic parties, cooler heads prevailed. Big Bird was spared.

Well, to borrow a line from former President Reagan, "Here we go again." When we should be talking about the serious budget deficit affecting America, the House Republican budget spent too much time resurrecting the old bumper stickers of the past. They went to America's bumper sticker museum and said: Well, let's see if there are some oldies but goodies here, and they loaded up the Republican budget bill with a lot of old issues. Some of them finally went back to the day when Newt Gingrich went after Big Bird. Sixteen years after Newt Gingrich, this new band of Republicans in the House is once again denouncing public broadcasting as a hotbed of subversive values, and they have vowed to pull the plug.

You may remember, Mr. President, our friends across the aisle actually tried to end funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting last November during the lameduck session. At that time, the rallying cry was outrage over NPR's firing of commentator Juan Williams. Now there is a new defunding effort underway and a new source of outrage. James O'Keefe, a rightwing activist with a video camera and a conservative agenda, released a video last week which he claims proves National Public Radio is a biased liberal organization that needs no Federal funding.

In the video, two allies of Mr. O'Keefe's pretend to be members of a Muslim education group who are con-

sidering making a large donation, they said, to NPR. Then they secretly recorded their meeting with two NPR executives.

If the name James O'Keefe rings a bell with Members of the Senate, it should. Remember some of the other things he was caught doing? It was James O'Keefe and his colleagues who posed as telephone repairmen and tried to lie their way into the office of our colleague, Senator MARY LANDRIEU of Louisiana. They were going to try to make one of their "gotcha" videos there. They went too far. At the end of it, Mr. O'Keefe pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor of entering Federal property under false pretenses. A Federal judge sentenced Mr. O'Keefe to 3 years probation, a fine of \$1,500, and 100 hours of community service.

This same Mr. O'Keefe, in 2009, posed with some of his friends as a pimp and prostitute to secretly film a discussion with staffers of the grassroots anti-poverty group ACORN. Their video of that meeting was so inflammatory Congress vowed to eliminate all Federal funding for that group.

I cannot tell you, Mr. President, how many amendments we had on the floor of the Senate—in the midst of all the problems we were facing in the country and around the world—focused on ACORN. Three separate investigations, incidentally, later cleared ACORN of any wrongdoing. A report by the Congressional Research Service found Mr. O'Keefe's undercover videotaping may have broken laws both in Louisiana and Maryland.

Mr. O'Keefe, obviously, is not too concerned about breaking a law if he thinks he is going to come up with a sensational video. He was convicted in Louisiana, as I mentioned earlier.

The New York Daily News—not exactly a liberal news organization—concluded, when it came to the ACORN incident, "they edited the tape to meet their agenda." As California's then-Attorney General Jerry Brown said, after they investigated the ACORN video:

Things are not always as partisan zealots portray them through highly selective editing of reality. Sometimes a fuller truth is found on the cutting room floor.

Mr. O'Keefe appears to be engaged in creative editing again, and this time his target is National Public Radio. That is not just my opinion. The Web site of none other than FOX News' own Glenn Beck—that is right, Glenn Beck—compares the edited and unedited versions of Mr. O'Keefe's latest video and concludes that the edited version appears to be deceptively edited in order to portray statements by one of the secretly recorded NPR executives out of context. An example: On the video, Ron Schiller, who was then in charge of fundraising for NPR, and has since been terminated, is heard to say:

It is very clear that we would be better off in the long run without Federal funding.

I have heard that repeated over and over; that this NPR fundraising execu-

tive said "we would be better off if we didn't have Federal funding." The far right has seized on this statement as proof NPR doesn't need it and shouldn't get it. But here is the part that ended up on the cutting room floor. Schiller explained, when they looked at the full transcript, that most "philanthropists" think NPR is almost fully funded by the government, which prevents many of them from donating. Mr. Schiller also said that if NPR lost all Federal funding now, "we would have a lot of stations go dark."

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting supports nearly 1,300 local radio and TV stations in communities all across America—in Illinois and I bet in West Virginia. Direct support for those stations makes up nearly 75 cents out of every dollar they spend. I know, because when you turn them on to listen to the news, they are begging for money. You send them a check and you think, I hope they will leave us alone for a little while.

Mr. President, 170 million Americans use public broadcasting services every month. That is more than half the population of America. In my State of Illinois, 1 million people listen to our 14 public radio stations, and 3 million people rely on our 8 public television stations. All totaled, funding for public broadcasting works out to about \$1.35 per American per year—11 cents a month. I would say that is a bargain. It is a fraction of what people would pay to get good information.

Eliminating Federal funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is going to force many smaller stations to close, if the House Republicans have their way. The first ones hit—West Virginia, the rural areas of Illinois, and smalltown America. They will be the ones to lose the service first. Rural communities will be hard hit, as they rely more than big stations in big cities on Federal funding.

Cutting all funding for public broadcasting? Does anybody seriously believe that will affect the deficit? But it would be a great loss to tens of millions of Americans who rely on public broadcasting for quality entertainment and honest, in-depth news coverage. With the momentous changes occurring in the world, and the major challenges facing our Nation, it is essential we maintain the integrity and viability of public broadcasting. There is nothing in commercial broadcasting that can replace it.

Some of our conservative friends—and one of them came up to me on the plane when I was heading home to Chicago last weekend—say they don't object so much to the content of public broadcasting, they just object philosophically to the whole idea of taxpayers' money being spent to subsidize radio and TV. They said let them go on the free market. If they can survive, fine; if they cannot, so be it. Here is what they ignore: FOX, NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN, virtually all the major network stations receive billions of dollars each year in public subsidies. How?

In the form of free use of the public TV spectrum. These stations do not own the airwaves. The American people own the airwaves, and we give them licenses to use our airwaves, America's airwaves, to make their profits.

The New America Foundation estimated the total value of the TV spectrum used by commercial TV stations at nearly \$5.5 billion a year, and that doesn't count the additional tens of millions of dollars that commercial TV stations make selling political ads every campaign season. Sound familiar? We have all been there, writing checks to these commercial TV stations to put on our ads so we can run for office and preserve the right of that TV station to use the public airwaves—free. The public subsidies to commercial stations dwarf what we spend on public broadcasting.

I admire the reporting on NPR, but I am a progressive Democrat. Many conservatives admire their reporting. David Brooks is a conservative I respect. He writes for the New York Times and I look forward to his column. Even when I disagree with him, I know it is a thoughtful analysis of the challenges we face. Listen to what he said:

I think NPR has done a good job over the last 10 years of reducing that bias. I thought it was really biased 10 years ago, but now I think it's pretty straight, and the Federal money for NPR doesn't go so much for the big stations. It goes out to the rural parts of the country which wouldn't have those stations otherwise.

David Brooks, you are right. If the Republicans have their way in the House, the losers will be a lot of red States in red parts of America that want to hear both sides of the story, as I believe all Americans should.

Tony Blankley was a longtime aide to Newt Gingrich who works now for FOX News and NPR. He said:

I've been on NPR regularly for a very long time. . . . From a personal perspective they have always given me plenty of access, I am clearly a right-wing commentator so I cannot complain. There's a conservative on and there's a liberal on, so that's all fair.

He added:

No editor or host has ever suggested, "Could you not be quite so conservative on this show?" I have been open and free to express my opinion.

Michael Medved is a conservative radio host. This is his take on NPR:

I think NPR tries harder to be fair than just about any other media source. . . . I listen almost every day to Morning Edition and All Things Considered. I think that they do as good a job as anybody in media in reporting the news.

The conservative blogger said of NPR:

My own interaction with them has been fine. I have found them to be fair. I think their coverage is often quite good. I think NPR does a good job.

As proof of NPR's political bias, some critics of public broadcasting point to what appear in the video to be critical comments Ron Schiller made about the Tea Party.

This is another incident of deceptive editing. The full transcript shows that Mr. Schiller was recounting the views expressed to him by two top Republicans, including a former ambassador.

Let me say very clearly: Even repeating those comments was ill-advised on Mr. Schiller's part. He no longer works for NPR.

And his comments have been roundly condemned by journalists who have given years of good work to NPR. In an open letter released last week to NPR listeners and supporters, the journalists said Mr. Schiller's comments:

. . . violated the basic principles by which we live and work: accuracy and open-mindedness, fairness and respect.

But the suggestion that NPR cannot be relied on to cover the Tea Party or conservative organizations fairly is refuted by Tea Party members themselves.

Katrina Pierson is a Tea Party activist in Houston. She told the media watchdog group Media Matters:

I think NPR was very cordial to our group. They actually came to Texas and spent a few days with us visiting our homes, and our work places. They attended meetings and asked questions. I enjoyed having them here. I think the reporting that they ended up using for All Things Considered, it was fair.

At a time in America when we value our government, when we applaud freedom, when we preach it to the world, when we beg authoritarian regimes to give their people a chance to hear both sides of the story, when we say that our Bill of Rights, when it comes to free speech and free press, should be a guidepost for the world, can we be in the business of shutting down this opportunity for Americans every single day to hear both sides of the story when it comes to the big issues? I don't think what was done in the House is about money. I think it is about a political philosophy. Many of them think they just want to shut down NPR because they are offended by some things that are said.

Let me say from my side of the spectrum, I have been offended the other way. I thought they went too far the other way. But isn't that what it is all about? They give you both sides, make up your own mind, and that is the way it should be.

We have seen what could happen when people rush to judgment after seeing selectively edited and sometimes deceptively edited videos. Shirley Sherrod was fired from her job at the Agriculture Department and painted unfairly as a bigot when she was, in fact, making a passionate plea for racial tolerance. Her comments were knowingly distorted in a video produced by a man who has, in the past, supported Mr. O'Keefe.

Congress voted to cut off Federal funding for ACORN before there was any objective investigation into Mr. O'Keefe's damaging video about them. Later investigation showed there was no criminal wrongdoing.

Let's not make the same mistake again. Let's not be duped by decep-

tively edited videos at a time when Americans need the objective reporting and informative programming that public radio and public television provide.

I yield the floor and suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. MERKLEY.) Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXPORT POLICY

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Earlier today in Columbus, OH, the State capital of my great State, I was at the Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business. We talked by phone with Under Secretary of Commerce Francisco Sanchez, who is one of the leaders at the Department of Commerce, on how to grow exports in this country.

The President has charged the Congress, our businesses, encouraged all of us to find ways to double exports as a major path to economic growth, especially to grow manufacturing in our country. We know that for the last several months, we have seen manufacturing growth, albeit too small, but manufacturing growth in this country.

That is especially important in Ohio. My State is the third leading manufacturing State in the country, behind only California and Texas, States which are two and three times our size in population. Yet Ohio has kept pace with doing relatively well in manufacturing. But we know what has happened to manufacturing in our country in the last 30 years.

Only 30 years ago, manufacturing was more than one-quarter of our GDP, financial services was about 10 or 11 percent of GDP. In these 30 years that position has almost flipped. Financial services is over one-quarter of our GDP, manufacturing is only 10, 11, or 12 percent. That is why the President and his push on exporting is so important, not that we only export manufacturing goods, of course, we export services, as we should. But clearly manufacturing is a major component of that.

I sit on the President's Export Advisory Council with leaders of the administration and the CEOs of some of America's largest companies and many successful mid-sized and small companies in this country. We had a meeting last Friday with Secretary Locke, Under Secretary Sanchez, Secretary of State Clinton, Jim McNerney of Boeing, Ursula Burns of Xerox, Alan Mullaly of Ford, as part of the President's export council.