

Below is the transcript from Dr. James Dobson's radio broadcast on the so-called "Fairness Doctrine." The audio of this show is available [here](#) .

John Fuller: Welcome to the Wednesday edition of "Focus on the Family" hosted by psychologist and author Dr. James Dobson. [JCD] I'm John Fuller, and if you're tuning in to hear Julie Ann Barnhill, I promise we'll come back to our conversation with her in the near future. Today, we'll be tackling some current events and I know you'll be interested in what we have for you. Dr. Dobson, you have been out. You've been traveling, you been in California, and hither and yon; it's good to have you back here in the studio.

JCD: Well, thank you, John. You know, the last week here has been a whirlwind of activity for Shirley and me. We went to Nashville, Tenn., to attend the National Religious Broadcasters Convention. You were there as well.

John: I was, indeed, and we were privileged to have you present the keynote speech at the closing banquet. That was great.

JCD: That was a very special time. I knew a lot of the people there after 31 years in radio, and it was a little reunion for me and many people. So I enjoyed it. Now I spoke on the final evening, as you said, and President George Bush, spoke to a very large and enthusiastic crowd that morning.

John: They were so enthusiastic, standing ovations and whistles of appreciation for the president.

JCD: You can get the notion listening to ABC, NBC, CBS, MSNBC and CNN that the whole world hates George Bush. I'll tell you that the people at that convention don't feel that way; they appreciated him being there and responded very graciously to his remarks.

During his address, especially in the opening moments,, he made some important comments about freedom of speech and the effort by Democrats and even some Republicans to limit the ability of people like us to talk about controversial issues. He was referring to the possible return of the Fairness Doctrine -- I'll explain what that is a little later. He made reference to it because he knew we all are concerned about that possibility. The President was right on target, and I want to let our listeners hear what he had to say.

I'm asking our listeners to really pay attention to what we're going to say here because this issue of the Fairness Doctrine is going to come back. There's going to be a struggle to preserve religious liberty and conservative thought and speech from people like Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Laura Ingraham, Hugh Hewitt and others. The Democrats in Congress are going to try to squelch these voices, and that's why we need to hear what the President has to say.

John: Let's go ahead and listen to about an 8-minute excerpt from that speech. Here's President George W. Bush speaking to members of the National Religious Broadcasters Association last Tuesday in Nashville, Tenn.

BODY

Announcer: Join me in welcoming the President of the United States, George W. Bush.

Audience: (Extended Applause and Cheers)

President George W. Bush: Thank you all. (Applause and Cheers) Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you for the warm welcome. Nothin' better than bein' introduced by a fellow Texan. (Laughter and Cheers) ...and it's good to see some of my Texas buddies here.

Thanks ... thanks for lettin' me come by. Uh ... this is kind of a rambunctious crowd. (Laughter) I um ... I really am pleased to be with you. For 64 years this association has brought together some of the most memorable voices of the ... our Christian community here in America. You have preached the blessings of grace and understanding and patience. I've needed all three during my time as President. (Laughter)

I ... you know, I was very young when I first learned about obedience to Higher Power and my mother sends her best to ya. (Chuckling) (Laughter) I uh ... I am surrounded by strong women and have been all my wife [sic] and speaking about a strong (Laughter) strong and gracious woman, Laura sends her love and best. (Applause and Whistles)

Uh ... we have something else in common. Each of us has had doors opened to us by the same man. He led the way for America's religious broadcasters. He brought the gospel to millions and many years ago, he helped me change my life. And today, this good man is recovering from surgery in NC and please join me in sending our love and prayers to Billy Graham. (Applause)

Love ... Americans love Billy Graham and I'm one. So, Billy, we're thinkin' about you. He has led countless of Americans to ... to the grace and goodness of the Almighty and each of you performs the same mission every day. You renew the poor in spirit, you bring comfort to those in anguish and you show millions the path to salvation and the peace of God.

I thank you for guiding the faithful. I thank you for strengthening America's families. I thank you for standing up for our values, including the right to life. (Applause) And I appreciate your firm belief in the universality of freedom. I believe and I know most of you, if not all of you, believe that every man, woman and child on the face of the earth has been given the great gift of liberty by an Almighty God.

This organization has had many important missions, but none more important that assuring our airwaves—America's airwaves—stay open to those who preach the Good News. (Applause and Cheers and Whistles) The very first amendment to our Constitution includes the freedom of speech and the freedom of religion. The Founders believed these unalienable rights were endowed to us by our Creator. They are vital to a healthy democracy and we must never let anyone take those freedoms away. (Applause)

I mention this, because there's an effort afoot that would jeopardize your right to express your views on public airways. Some members of Congress want to reinstate a regulation that was repealed 20 years ago. It has the Orwellian name called "The Fairness Doctrine." Supporters of this regulation say we need to mandate that any discussion of so-called "controversial issues" on the public airways includes equal time for all sides.

This means that many programs wanting to stay on the air would have to meet Washington's

definition of "balance." Of course, for some in Washington, the only option ... opinions that require balancing are the ones they don't like. (Murmurs) We know (Applause) ... we know who these advocates of so-called "balance" really have in their sights--shows hosted by people like Rush Limbaugh or James Dobson [JCD] or many of you here today.

By insisting on so-called "balance," they want to silence those they don't agree with. The truth of the matter is, they know they cannot prevail in the public debate of ideas. They don't acknowledge that you are the balance, that you give voice (Applause) ... The country should not be afraid of the diversity of opinions. After all, we're strengthened by diversity of opinions.

If Congress truly supports the free and open exchange of ideas, then there is a way they can demonstrate that right now. Republicans have drafted legislation that would ban reinstatement of the so-called "Fairness Doctrine." Unfortunately, Democratic leaders in the House of Representatives have blocked action on this bill. So, in response, nearly every Republican in the House has signed onto what's called a "Discharge Petition" that will require Congress to hold an up or down vote on the ban. Supporters of this petition are only 24 signatures away.

But I'll tell you this. If Congress should ever pass any legislation that stifles your right to express your views, I'm gonna veto it. (Extended Applause and Cheers and Whistles)

We love freedom in America and we're the leader of the world, not because we try to limit freedom, but because we have helped to spread it. You and I know that freedom has the power to transform lives. You and I know that free societies are more peaceful and more prosperous. You and I know that, if given the chance, men and women and children in every society on earth will choose a life of freedom, just given a chance. Unless of course, you don't believe freedom is a gift from the Almighty.

The liberty we value is not ours alone. Freedom is not America's gift to the world. It is God's gift to all humanity. (Applause)

CLOSING WRAP

John: And that's just a portion of a speech by President George W. Bush at last week's National Religious Broadcasters Convention in Nashville, Tenn. He spoke about a variety of subjects during the course of this speech, but, Dr. Dobson, he's very passionate about protecting our freedom of speech.

JCD: That's one of the reasons he was so wonderfully received by that large audience, John. We're all concerned about freedom of speech, and that's why this was such an important statement. The far left and especially the Democratic leadership in Congress, is maneuvering to bring back this Fairness Doctrine, which was in effect from 1949 to 1987. It was a miserable failure. It stifled speech, which is guaranteed in the Constitution. And yet, because talk radio tends to be conservative, those who come from the leftist end of the political continuum want to do what they can to muzzle it and stifle it. So I appreciated so much the President's promise to veto the Fairness Doctrine if it does get out of Congress and come to him for a signature.

John: And, of course, we're in the last year of his administration, so some questions remain about what's coming down the pike. Obviously, what happens this fall could very well determine

the types of battles that we'll have over this issue in the coming years.

JCD: The election in November is going to have a whole lot to do with the issue of freedom of speech and our ability to even do what we're doing here today. Can you imagine? We are talking about the Fairness Doctrine. It's of importance to American people on a variety of issues and yet we might not be able to even tell people what the concerns are if this would occur.

You know I write a monthly letter and it goes to over a million people. We send one every 30 days, and I changed my mind about the subject after preparing something on Fairness Doctrine; I instead devoted the letter to Easter and to some of the writings of theologians about Jesus and the Resurrection.. But I want to read what I initially wrote about this threat to our freedom of speech.

Here's a snippet of what I wrote: Dear friends, have you noticed that in recent years, liberals have tried to silence the voices of conservatives in every way possible? It began with an ill-fated attempt to compete with conservative talk radio by creating a liberal radio network called Air America. A huge amount of money was infused into the new broadcasting venture, which was built around a well-known individual whose views are far, far to the left. I can't identify him because he is currently running for public office and the restrictions on free speech imposed by the IRS prohibit me from even mentioning his name.

It doesn't matter, anyway, because Air America collapsed like an old building blasted to bits by a demolition team. When that effort went up in smoke, liberals in the Senate regrouped and proposed Senate Bill 1, which would have required organizations such as Focus on the Family to report to the Senate anytime we told the American people what their representatives in Washington were doing. Do you remember when we talked about this?

John: Oh, I remember the discussions we had about that -- and our listeners really reacted strongly to what we told them.

JCD: There's significance in it being Senate Bill 1, because this was the first piece of legislation that the Democrats introduced in the Senate after having won the majority in the election of '06. So it tells you what their priorities are and they wanted to prohibit us from even reporting what our very representatives are doing. How is that for logic? Abraham Lincoln said that ours is a government by the people, of the people and for the people, but according to Senate Bill 1, the people are not entitled to know what's going on in the nation's capital. The penalty for violating that bill would have been \$200,000 per incident. And we went on the radio and asked our listeners, our friends, to oppose its passage, and they did so in enormous numbers. And liberals in the Senate ran for the tall grass. But they will be back, I guarantee you.

Then came what we've been talking about, what the President mentioned today, an outrageous effort to re-impose the so-called Fairness Doctrine—a grossly flawed regulation that would require radio stations to "balance" every conservative broadcast with one featuring liberal voices. Again the Congress was whacked for even considering such a scheme. Nevertheless, we're told that the Fairness Doctrine will be brought back after the next election, depending on which party wins. Stay tuned and be prepared for a fight.

Now I went on from there –but John, you, have another concern on your heart that came up at NRB having to do with religious liberty.

John: Well, that's right. Our religious freedoms are threatened not only by the possible re-emergence of the Fairness Doctrine, but during the NRB convention there was a lot of discussion about hate-speech legislation. It's my understanding that Congress came very, very close to passing hate-speech legislation which could be used to silence religious speech – not only on TV and radio, but also in the pulpits in our churches.

JCD: John, that one is coming back. I promise you it is a certainty depending on who has control of the House and Senate, and the White House.

John: And I hope our listeners will pay attention to the news stories they see about these pieces of legislation and these efforts by the Congress to try to shut us down. It's really a disturbing trend.

JCD: What is so disturbing about this, John, is that it contradicts the freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution. I just don't understand how they can get away with assaulting us in that way. The McCain-Feingold bill did it, the IRS does it with the backing of Congress. One of the very first things that our Founding Fathers did after they ratified the Constitution was to pass the Bill of Rights, which included in it guarantees for freedom of religion and freedom of speech – among other personal freedoms. And yet here we are, more than 200 years later, still fighting to defend those freedoms.

Now there are some members of the House and Senate who see this issue the way we do, and some of them are already fighting our battles for us. And one of them is Mike Pence, a representative from Indiana. He's a Republican, a very good friend of mine.

John: A good man, yes.

JCD: He's a man that I respect very, very much. And in the Senate, Norm Coleman has joined with Rep. Pence and they have introduced something they're calling the Broadcaster Freedom Act of 2007. It's House Resolution 2905 and Senate Resolution 1742. The bill would prevent the Federal Communications Commission from reinstating the Fairness Doctrine. By the way, I need to insert something here: When a new president takes office, as will occur on Jan. 20 of next year, that day the FCC chairman automatically resigns and the president nominates a new FCC chairman. So you can see how what happens in November will greatly influence what happens with regard to religious liberty.

The House leadership, under the democratic majority, particularly Speaker Nancy Pelosi, is holding up Congressman Pence's bill, keeping it from moving to the floor for a vote. It will pass, we feel, if it gets to the floor. But the majority is able to keep legislation coming for a vote. So, Congressman Pence has filed what is known as a discharge petition to move the bill directly to the floor. To get that done the petition needs 218 signatures, and right now it has 194. In other words, 194 members of the House of Representatives have signed on to this petition. They need only 24 more congressmen to sign on to the Broadcaster Freedom Act to get a vote in the House. So there's a list on our website, at www.citizenlink.com, where our listeners can find out

which members of Congress have not yet signed the petition and find out how to contact their own member of Congress.

This would solve the problem regarding The Fairness Doctrine, because if it passes in the House and Senate it would prevent that legislation from coming and we would not have to fight this battle in 2009. We're very, very close to getting it done, and we need a massive outpouring from our listeners to urge 24 more members of the House to sign on to the petition.

And there's no reason why it should not occur. On June 30th last year, Congressman Pence filed an amendment to the Financial Services Appropriations Bill prohibiting any funds in that bill being used to impose the Fairness Doctrine on broadcasters. So it was a step in that direction and the amendment passed overwhelmingly: 309-115. A hundred and thirteen Democrats joined 106 republicans in favor of banning the funding for the Fairness Doctrine. And yet this time, with this petition, not one single Democrat has signed on. The 194 that have are all Republicans.

So we really do need to put pressure on those Democrats and the Republicans who have not signed on. We need The Broadcaster Freedom Act of 2007 in order to protect us from the Fairness Doctrine—not only now, but in the future.