

Fairly unlikely

Some talkradio hosts are obsessed with the Fairness Doctrine.

I'm told that One Very Big Guy is downright spooked about the prospect of Congressional Democrats driving a new Fairness Doctrine right onto Barack Obama's desk. I'm told it's not just a bit, but his own personal belief – or fear. He's afraid that a renewed Fairness Doctrine would push him off the air in many markets. Well, that's not going to happen, on either count. Bad ratings will drive somebody off the prime radio spots, but somebody says "this is almost like a fantasy the talkradio community can't give up." It no doubt "plays to the base" of movement conservatives (stuff like talking up Sarah Palin for 2012 or asking if Obama really has a valid U.S. birth certificate). But there's little in the real world to think that Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid will actually spend much time or political capital on this issue. The Supreme Court would probably trounce it. But there's a bigger danger behind all the fearful chatter about a new Fairness Doctrine to require some balance in political views – that talkhosts will seem mean or small-minded, and risk turning off potential talk listeners. Maybe not in the red states that voted for McCain, largely in the South and that vertical band of Midwestern states. But elsewhere.



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Clear Channel may finally be ready to trade away Houston's KHMX and KLOL.

Is the swapping partner CBS? That's the Houston rumor, anyhow. Houston's one of the four markets where Clear Channel's under an agreement with the Justice Department to divest stations as a condition of its going private back on July 30. With credit frozen tighter than your refrigerator ice-cube tray, the most likely way to handle the dispositions is through non-cash swaps – which is exactly what Clear Channel did earlier this year with Lotus, to fix a divestiture situation in Las Vegas that also roped in San Antonio and Bakersfield. Let's see if "Mix" KHMX (96.5) and "Mega" KLOL (101.1) leave the family in the same fashion. On the CBS side, it's certainly got room under the FCC regs for more stations in Houston. It currently has just four: country KILT-FM (100.3), sports KILT (610), "Hot Hits 95.7" CHR KKHH and "News 650" KIKK. But what stations or market would it swap away elsewhere, in return for a couple of FMs in Houston?

"If Mid-West Family is cutting personnel, things must be bad..."

One Midwestern-area T-R-I reader observes that "Mid-West Family runs terrific stations and has owned them for many years. So if they're cutting people in Madison like Glen Gardner and Tim Morrissey – things must be bad." That appears to be the case – but mostly at low-rated talker WTDY (1670). Management didn't call me back, but the Wisconsin State Journal confirms the tip that morning show co-hosts Gardner and Morrissey are out, plus newsman Erik Greenfield. The paper says four others were dropped from fulltime status back to part-time. The station has re-deployed market veteran John "Sly" Sylvester from middays to mornings, and will plug Westwood's Dennis Miller show into middays. The State Journal says Mid-West Family still has about 60 employees at the cluster of AC "Magic 98" WMGN, country "Q106.3" WWQM, rock WJJO (94.1) and "Pulse" WTDY. [Discuss](#)



Volvo becomes the first automobile marque with HD Radio standard in 2009.

All but one of the Volvos that go on sale starting next March will be equipped with HD Radio receivers – the first time the iBiquity folks can really use the important word "standard" on a press release about a whole line of cars. HD-equipped Volvos include the S40, the V50 wagon, the XC90, the S60 sedan, the "flagship S80 luxury sedan", the S70 wagon, the C30, and the "Cross Country" XC70. The only model without HD capability as a standard will be the X60.

America's apathy toward the survival of the Big 3 automakers is a warning to radio.

Right now popular opinion and Congressional sentiment are generally saying – "You guys dug yourself into this hole, and we're not bailing you out." B101, Philadelphia owner Jerry Lee's been talking for years about the need for radio to put out its very best product (both programming and sales). His analogy is to a fairly ordinary, maybe even slightly dirty convenience store that does good business



as long as it's the only retailer around. But the minute somebody builds a nicer, cleaner store across the street – business goes downhill fast at the old joint. Jerry Lee doesn't want radio to become like that corner store, which cut its product and failed to do good marketing and all the other quality things. Radio better not let itself get into the predicament of GM, Ford and Chrysler, either. The RAB's Jeff Haley is asking radio stations to support the Big 3, just as the carmakers have used and supported American radio for decades. Haley says the industry's worth saving and rallying around. So how do you feel about radio, right now? Meanwhile, one Detroiter is putting his money where his mouth is, buying radio ads –

Car-country politician Robert Ficano spent \$10,000 yesterday on ads in Washington and Birmingham.

In Washington, that was to tell the story about how the Big 3 must be rescued by Congress. And in Birmingham, to put a little constituent pressure on Alabama Republican Senator Richard Shelby. The ads (reported by the Detroit Free Press) note that Shelby has called the U.S. auto industry "a dinosaur" that deserves to fail. The ad copy for Birmingham says "Making loans available now to the American companies who stood up for America is not only patriotic, but makes sense. Call Senator Richard Shelby and tell him to stand up for the car companies that still secure our freedom today." The Washington version of the spot reminds listeners of how Detroit helped the military effort during World War II, and the fact that 1 in every 10 American jobs has a connection to the auto industry. Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano directed money from his own campaign account to buy the time on Citadel's talk WAPI (1070) and classic rock WZRR (99.5) in Birmingham, and talk-formatted WMAL (630) in Washington.

"People are really giving Interep business here in the last month – it's amazing."

This longtime observer of the national sales/rep world says after Interep filed for Chapter 7 "It's like the agencies woke up and said 'Hey, for years we've been shoveling all this money at just one company'" – Clear Channel-owned Katz – "and now we've helped create this situation where there's just one big national rep." That's not good for the bargaining position of clients and agencies and some of them are just waking up to it. Interep's still on the bubble, of course. It's got a bankruptcy court date next Tuesday and we should get a clearer – though probably not final – picture of what its future will be. Katz offered a cash payment of \$3.64 million just for the right to negotiate with Interep clients and staff, but that doesn't mean it'll buy Interep in the end. Or – that it would legally be allowed to buy its only real competitor. There are mixed opinions about that. More in the next T-R-I about the brinkmanship of Interep – which seems to be gaining in popularity just as its existence is threatened.



Arbitron stock suddenly has a big bulls-eye painted on it.

"ARB" plunged 25% yesterday, depressed by two analyst downgrades (JP Morgan and CL King) and the implications about Nielsen's invasion of its turf. The Arbitron board announced a 10-cent-per share dividend, but they should've saved that for another day, because nothing was going to stop the run on Arbitron stock. When the trading volume is nearly five times the daily average – there's pressure. And when the stock's off a hefty \$5.31 in a single day – there's definite pressure. The closing price of \$16.38 was very near the day's low of \$16.31, and that was easily a 52-week low and something like an eight-year low. But Arbitron should take heart that the after-hours traders bid it up \$1.23 to \$17.61. Why all the doom-and-gloom from the analysts? Jim Boyle at CL King – following up on his close questioning of management on Tuesday – figures that as much as 19% of Arbitron's revenue could be at risk if it loses more small markets. But even so, he's got a new price target of \$27, down from \$38. And he's not pulling the plug. If Nielsen really has wider ambitions in radio – it won't have a cake walk. Arbitron's got lots of three and four and five-year contracts out there. (All the PPM deals in the lucrative big markets are for five years.) There's also history to consider -



Nielsen got in trouble with radio ratings in the early 1960s.

T-R-I reader and George Washington University media prof Chris Sterling says "There were embarrassing congressional hearings in the early 1960s that highlighted Nielsen's shortcomings", mostly revolving around the lack of sample from the central and mountain time zones. Sterling says "The House Commerce Committee had earlier commissioned a detailed critique of ratings – radio and television – which led to the formation in 1963 of the Broadcast Ratings Council." That was the



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The banner features a green and white logo on the left that says "RADIO HALL OF FAME" inside a stylized radio ear. On the right, there is a black and white image of a vintage microphone. The background is dark with white and green text.

predecessor of today's Media Rating Council, which reviews research techniques for radio, TV and other media. The MRC is the body that hasn't yet accredited the Arbitron People Meter outside of the Houston market. Presumably it will be receiving a massive amount of data over the next few months from Nielsen, supporting its new "sticker diary"-based radio service in 50 Cumulus markets. Sterling's right – this is a "return" to the field of radio, but after a time lapse of over four decades.

Nielsen must think Arbitron is vulnerable.

Nielsen's no doubt been reading headlines about various authorities (New York state A-G, New Jersey A-G) issuing subpoenas or calling for investigations (the New York City Council, FCC Commissioner Adelstein, and an Illinois Senator named Obama). Susan Whiting's looking for new revenue sources, and you have to think that just doing 50 smaller markets that might cost Arbitron \$7-10 million in revenue isn't worth the attention of a multi-billion-dollar multi-national research behemoth. So is Nielsen looking to eventually swipe all of Arbitron's radio business? Arbitron has to operate on that assumption – and also think that at some point, Nielsen might try to acquire Arbitron outright. If Nielsen can take chunk out of Arbitron's balance sheet, that would reduce the price, while Nielsen earns some credibility in radio.

Arbitron says it's not like Nielsen – it's not canceling important client meetings.

This is going to be doozie of a PR battle, isn't it? Political junkies de-toxing after the campaign can now watch Arbitron and Nielsen feud, and it's already starting. MediaPost reports that Nielsen's canceling its annual March 11-13 client meeting in Las Vegas, for economic reasons. (And suggesting the meeting had a high wining-and-dining quotient.) While Arbitron quickly lets the press know that "you won't see Arbitron canceling Advisory Council meetings [and] citing the economy as an excuse." It says those meetings "are a serious, substantive interchange of ideas and priorities...Our radio station and agency advisory councils are on the calendar to stay for 2009." "We'll be seeing much more of this – and maybe we should think of a name for the ongoing coverage, like "Ratings Wars." Got a point of view about Arbitron-Nielsen? I'm at Tom@in3media.com. One skeptical T-R-I reader, a small-market station owner, says this about Arbitron's claim that Nielsen's once-a-year ratings are "a step backward." He says "I don't recall [once-a-year delivery] being part of their sales pitch for their County Coverage product, which comes out just once a year and contains data over a year old when it's released....I guess really old diary measurement is okay in really small markets – as long as the agencies get it for virtually free and stations pay for it."

Triton's Mike Agovino says "I've seen this paralysis sink into the industry" about "digital extensions."

That was the title of yesterday's standing-room-only IRTS session in Manhattan – "Digital extensions." Agovino says Triton's "trying to simplify all this" for station-level people who may feel overwhelmed with the streaming and other new media choices for radio. He says what radio needs is smart vendors and the right relationships. On the revenue side, TargetSpot's Eric Ronning says "my current fear is that having lived through the bubble of the dot-com world at Yahoo", revved-up advertisers will say "this is the only thing we want to do with our money." But then they may "rush in, have a bad experience" - and feel a letdown. The thrust of the panel is that several years into radio's digital experience, it needs tools and standards and an attitude of "keeping it easy" for radio, clients and agencies. Otherwise, everybody misses out. Panel moderator Brian Benedik of Katz 360 and organizer Bruce Feniger of Katz both said this was the best-attended of any of the five sessions staged this year by the International Radio & Television Society in New York – and that should tell you how high the interest level is. Much of yesterday's bottom line came down to this –



With digital - keep it simple.

Ando Media's Paul Krasinski acknowledges "there is a shift going on [of ad dollars] to digital, no question." Ando's goal in the measurement business is to "keep it simple through technology." Another important way to keep it simple - focus on the results a campaign can produce. Not the number of "clicks and picks." (Hey, that's just old-fashioned radio salesmanship, isn't it?) Krasinski says "You need to highlight how many people walked through the door at Staples or the dealership." Radio should focus on results, more than the technical stuff – or, more than on the reach of radio or online radio or other media. That brought up the question of the place of "branding" in the online/new media universe, and there were some subtle differences of opinion at the IRTS "Digital Extensions" session. Google Audio Ads director Bruce Falck says "Chief marketing officers are turning over at a bizarre rate" at clients. They're caught between the imperatives of branding and transactional business. And the Google executive predicts that "less-accountable media will lose money" to others. So you'd better be able to show results. But that's also slippery, isn't it? Several panel members agreed that the online consumer who clicks "add to shopping cart" has been influenced by a TV ad or radio ad or billboard. It's the job of the earlier impression-maker to get some credit for it.

Is radio keeping up with its digital competitors?

Matt Feinberg tells yesterday's IRTS panel in New York that "while radio's at the forefront of streaming, it seems that TV companies, because they have deep pockets, got up to speed real fast." That's apparent in this year's upfront selling season. Longtime Zenithmedia buying exec Feinberg believes that "what the radio industry has to do is provide more of a unified front...it has to lay off the radio-centric part, and be more audio-centric" in its pitches. He predicts "that will get you more recognition with advertisers." What does he mean by "united front"? Well, common platforms. And "having people who speak the languages of traditional media and new media, so that planners understand what they're getting." Is there money in all this? Triton Media COO Mike Agovino tells the room he'd just gotten an email about a client cluster in Casper, Wyoming which sold \$100,000 in business from digital. Eric Ronning of TargetSpot agrees that "there's a huge amount of money" in what they call the "hyper-local market", for a one-location dry cleaner that can't afford to be on the local radio station, but can get a digital spot from that station and drive results. More in the days to come from a very fruitful session by the International Radio & Television Society in New York. Speaking of "fruitful", IRTS thanked Dial Global for contributing the pastries and fruit for the 9am session. Normally, these free sessions are coffee-only.

Latest Miami Arbitrends show a three-way tie at the top.

"Clasica 92.3" WCMQ, "Hot 105" WHQT and "Radio Amor" WAMR all show with a 5.8 for August-September-October - a rare sight in a market that size. In Charlotte - there's a budding new #1, with urban AC WBAV up 5.9-6.3, pushing past country WSOC (6.2-6.1). In Orlando - there's a tie at the very top, this one between urban AC "Star" WCFB and country "K92" WWKA. They both sport a 6.4. And in Gainesville, Florida - Dix Communications' "K Country" WOGK can afford to lose 2 shares off the Summer book (12.6-10.7), because it's still easily the #1 ranker again this month. Study all the Phase I Arbitrends at the Ratings Page of Radio-Info.com, [here](#).



Arbitron Fall 2008 Phase I Arbitrends

12. Miami - Ft. Lauderdale - Hollywood - 3,538,400

25. Charlotte - Gastonia - Rock Hill - 1,886,100

34. Orlando - 1,479,900

46. West Palm Beach - Boca Raton - 1,116,400

83. Gainesville - Ocala - 541,600

Click on the city to review recently released trends. View a complete list of Arbitron markets [here](#).

Sound Bites:

Put your station's logo - and streaming - right on an iPhone, says Jacobs Media...and they can do it, with a new "killer app" for the hot 3G iPhone. There was a fair amount of talk at yesterday's IRTS "Digital Extensions" session about the developers' frenzy to create iPhone applications - and then I checked my email to see this iPhone-related release from consultant Jacobs Media. Stations not only can offer their own "Q109/Kiss/Magic/Rock" logo on the desktop screen of the iPhone - they can also supply up to five individual streams through it, including HD multicast feeds and other custom offerings (like Christmas tunes) under the station's logo. The first station up with the service is Greater Media's WRIF, Detroit (101.1). More about the new product [here](#).

Foneshow adds geo-targeting to its radio-for-mobile phone product, enhancing the opportunities for targeted ad sales - literally down to the level of a fractional zip code. Founder/CEO Erik Schwartz says that geo-targeting makes Foneshow "more than just a radio-on demand platform...it becomes a terrific tool for affiliate relations." Thus "an individual in Los Angeles who subscribes to a certain radio show will hear a pre- and post-roll sweeper that applies to their local affiliate."

Foneshow



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Faces on the Radio:

Peter Greenberg takes time out from his SSI-syndicated Saturday show to write "Don't Go There – The travel detective's essential guide to the must-miss places of the world." Peter's produced other tomes, but this one's certainly a switch on the stereotypical "wonderful places to visit" travel guide. Syndicated Solutions says his weekend radio show clears on more than 140 stations, plus XM and the Armed Forces Radio Network.

"How do you find out about this stuff?" I hear that a lot from readers of T-R-I – about stories of future format changes or station sales or leaked memos or corporate strategy. Part of the answer is the message boards at Radio-Info.com – they contain some amazing nuggets of information, posted by very plugged-in people. (They also carry some just plain gossip, which may or may not bear out.) I pay attention to that, thanks to help from the board editors. Part of the answer is that I talk to a lot of radio people. And part of the answer is that folks are often simply willing to share things with me – so I can try to understand what's going on and pass it on. That's the deal – you give T-R-I some of your valuable time, and you'll get the news and the context. I'm at Tom@in3media.com, and thanks for reading T-R-I.

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