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American freedom of speech threatened

By Sara Warrender
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A Federal Communications Commission study shows government issues may now be more closely monitored

Recently, the country has been up in arms over the government's infringement on their Second Amendment rights concerning gun control. Now, a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sponsored study of media and newsroom pieces is a possibility. With the FCC plan, government researchers would enter newsrooms around the country—including radio broadcast stations—to ask reporters, managers and other media personnel in-depth questions about the news stations' coverage of government-determined, newsworthy issues.

The plan was intended to take effect in 2013, but now in 2014, it has been held again. According to an article published by Fox News, the pilot study in South Carolina will not take place until a "new study design" is finalized. With this new design, the agency claimed interviews with "media owners, news directors or reporters" will not be included.



CENSORED — New regulations may soon be seen in the media. *Google Images*

If I trusted the government's general sense of ethics, then maybe this claim would put my mind at ease. What are they saying when they determine they will not interview those in the newsroom? Simply, they will not interview. But, with that statement, they are voiding only one method of entry. If there are loopholes in this new plan to gain information, we can be sure the ones who created it will know and plan to use those loopholes, regardless of interviews, to reach their intended goal.

Also, a plan roughly 78 pages in length must have taken the government extensive time to prepare. Would they really disregard the plan because the people have spoken? Looking at President Barack Obama's administration track record, it seems as if the American people and their opinions are not top priority.

"(The Radio and Television Digital News Association) views this as an important admission by the FCC that questions regarding editorial policies and practices are off-limits to the government," Mike Cavender, director of The Radio and Television News Directors Association, said in a Fox News article. "We are eager to see the revised study to insure there aren't topics or questions that could be construed as a 'back door' attempt to gather the same type of information."

The government will be hard-pressed to subtly pass another compromising plan under the nose of America's watchdogs.

The original FCC plan listed what government officials believe the average American should hear first when turning on their favorite news station. This extensive list included 25 points of news topics. Listed in descending order, it began with crime and continued with health issues, business and economy, environment, education, public issues and human interest, as well as others.

According to this list, the government expected newsrooms to cover environmental issues—No. 4 on the list—before wars in Iraq, Afghanistan or the war on terror—No. 16-19. So, if erosion is an issue or, God forbid, global warming, you can be sure to be educated on those issues before you hear about a terrorist attack. Remember, environmental issues on this list are different than fires or other disasters, which are ranked No. 15.

Let us hope this list does not make it on the new plan. News should be based on relevance, time sensitivity and, of course, America's need. However, the need of America is not accurately portrayed in this list, because if it were, I would hope wars on terror would be far above environmental issues.

"From its inception, the Obama administration has proven that it's not only intolerant of critics, but that it will use the full power of an increasingly partisan bureaucracy to intimidate Americans and rein in dissent," Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice, wrote in a Fox News article. "The administration turned the IRS on the Tea Party, it unleashed the Department of Justice on wayward reporters, and now the FCC is preparing to snoop into America's television and radio studios."

The truth is, they are still preparing the plan. It is simply extended to a later date. With those feeding on a power-hungry kick in Washington, D.C., we never really know what to expect. Many Americans, those in and out of newsrooms, grasp the importance of standing up for our First Amendment, so it seems safe to say Americans will stand together against the next attack aimed toward our fundamental freedoms. Stand tall Americans, because an infringement on America's newsroom truly affects each and every one of us.

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