

Conservatives warn of back-door censorship

by UPI

WASHINGTON - Conservatives said they worry Democrats will take a less visible approach to crack down on a U.S. media company that airs a popular conservative talk show host.

After the U.S. Senate voted in favor of a measure that would bar federal regulators from reinstating the Fairness Doctrine for broadcasting, it also passed an amendment would direct the Federal Communications Commission to "promote diversity in communication media ownership and to ensure that broadcast station licenses are used in the public interest," The Hill reported Friday.

The amendment's sponsor, U.S. Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., said the measure was to encourage more women and minorities to apply for radio and TV ownership. The Senate voted 57-41 without a single Republican vote to add Durbin's measure to the District of Columbia Voting Rights Act, which passed the Senate Thursday.

Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., who heads the conservative Senate Republican Steering Committee, claimed the proposal would lead to regulatory pressure on Clear Channel, which owns and operates more than 1,200 radio stations in the United States and airs "The Rush Limbaugh Show," a popular show among conservatives.

"Senator Durbin's amendment exposed Democrat intentions to impose radio censorship through the back door using vague regulations dealing with media ownership," DeMint said.

DeMint aides said the proposal was an attempt to "muzzle successful syndicated radio programs" such as Limbaugh, a charge Durbin dismissed, the Washington publication said.

"To argue what I am putting here is a dramatic change in the law, is going to somehow muzzle Rush Limbaugh -- that's not the case," Durbin said during floor debate.

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