

Why is Senator Grams trying to stifle the voices of Minnesota?



Senator Grams has strong views about freedom of speech. For example, he says that political contributions are a form of free speech, comparable to the millions spent advertising potato chips, and should not be limited. Now, Senator Grams is trying to stifle non-profit radio in Minnesota. But how does this fit in with his views on free speech?

Senator Grams is sponsoring a bill backed by the National Association of Broadcasters that severely curtails low-power FM radio, an exciting new community broadcast service many Minnesota non-profit organizations are planning to use.

Why on earth is he doing this?

Senator Grams serves on the Senate banking committee, not the broadcast committee. He has never sponsored Senate legislation about broadcasting before. As far as we know, he has never attended a single public hearing about low-power FM community radio — in fact, the U.S. Senate has not held any hearings.

But the National Association of Broadcasters did give him \$7,000, its fifth largest contribution to a

Senate candidate this season (box #1). Does money talk louder than Minnesotans?

Senator Grams' bill is a major disappointment to a lot of people in Minnesota — all kinds of people in schools, churches, civic and community groups (box #2). They're among the 1,200 non-profit groups nationwide who have already applied for a low-power FM (LPFM) license to serve their members and communities better.

But if Senator Grams keeps pushing this bill, they will never have the chance. The nation's biggest commercial broadcasters will have succeeded in

smothering our last chance for truly local radio serving Minnesota — and forty-nine other states.

Here are just a few of the Minnesota LPFM applicants Senator Grams would block:

"The airwaves belong to all and this will give voice to those who have no voice. We are the only Hmong organization in Minnesota, possibly in the world, that focuses exclusively on the arts. Our programming will include Hmong poetry, singing, music, community forums, one-on-one interviews and radio plays. Radio is extremely important to our community because 95% of Hmong are illiterate. Low-power radio will allow us to reach an audience never reached before. Also, mainstream communities will have the chance to experience Hmong art and to learn about social issues in the community."

— **Lee Vang**, *Center for Hmong Arts & Talent, Minneapolis*

"Through We Win Institute, children aged 10-15 will be able to let their communities know what's important to them. Whether it's music education or community affairs, low-power radio will really give them a voice. To watch children's faces light up when they recognize they have something valuable to contribute to their community, to hear them turn their thoughts and feelings into stories for the first time, is amazing. Through radio, we can take our programs for children to a whole new level."

— **Titilayo Bediako**, *We Win Institute, Minneapolis*

"The Minneapolis-St. Paul Independent Media Center hopes to produce and present grassroots coverage of local and non-local political, cultural and environmental issues. The Center's impact will improve dramatically if we have access to a low-power radio station because only a fraction of households have Internet access, limiting our present reach. Interspersed with the grassroots news and public affairs programming, we would present music and spoken word programming featuring independent and local artists who get little or no time on big commercial radio, exposing our listeners to new viewpoints and artistic styles."

— **Glenn Austin**, *Minneapolis-St. Paul Independent Media Center, St. Paul*

Low-power FM radio uses part of the publicly-owned radio spectrum that now goes to waste. It lets qualifying non-profit groups with a geographic focus take to the local air-waves on stations of 10-100 watts, serving a radius of five to seven miles. After thorough planning and review, the Federal Communications Commission is moving ahead to issue the first low-power FM licenses. But big commercial broadcasters are now trying to kill the program in the House and Senate.

Despite FCC guarantees that no low-power station will interfere with existing stations, Senator Grams' bill uses ungrounded technical issues to smother non-commercial radio.

◆ To learn more about low-power FM, please visit the non-profit Media Access Project online at www.mediaaccess.org.

◆ To send a message to Senator Grams, mail the coupon below. Or contact Capitol Hill by going to congress.nw.dc.us/lpr/.

It's what freedom of speech is really about.

2) CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-PROFITS ARE AMONG THE MINNESOTA GROUPS APPLYING FOR LOW-POWER FM RADIO LICENSES:

Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, St. Paul / Assembly Of God Church, Sherburn / Bemidji Religious Education Broadcasting, Bemidji / Bemidji State University/Mass Communications, Bemidji / Big River Senior Radio, Coon Rapids / Bluff Country Broadcasting, Houston / Calvary Chapel St. Paul, St. Paul / Calvary Chapel Twin Cities, Edina / Cambridge Adventist Broadcasting Corporation, New Cambridge / Caravan / Broadcasting Association, Alexandria / Center for Hmong Arts & Talent, St. Paul / Christ Lutheran Church on Capital Hill, St. Paul / Christian Radio Broadcasting of Owatonna, Blooming Prairie / Concordia College Corporation, Moorhead / Didjcast Foundation, Mankato / Divine Mercy Communications of Rochester / Duluth Adventist Radio Ministry, Duluth / East Hillside Community Club, Duluth / Minnesota Business Academy, St. Paul / Esko Senior Citizens, Esko / First Presbyterian Church of Round Lake / Fort Mckeen Detachment Old Scouts Society, Eagan Chapter, Eagan / Friendship Community Services, Minneapolis / General Committee for a Shorter Workweek, Minneapolis / Green Party of Minnesota, Minneapolis / Hinckley Adventist Broadcasting Corporation, Hinkley / Hmong National Organization, St. Paul / Hope Presbyterian Church, Spicer / Lyndale Neighborhood Association, Minneapolis / Macalester College, St. Paul / Message of the Heart, Minneapolis / Minneapolis American Indian Center, Minneapolis / Minneapolis Neighborhood Communications, South Minneapolis / Minneapolis Property Rights Action Committee, Minneapolis / Minneapolis-St. Paul Community Teaching Center, Minneapolis / Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers, Minneapolis / Minnesota Fellowship of Reconciliation, Minneapolis / Minneapolis-St. Paul Independent Media Center, St. Paul / Moose Lake Adventist Broadcasting Corporation, Sturgeon Lake / New Life Worship Center, Rochester / Northern Dawn Local Council, Covenant of the / Goddess, Minneapolis / Our Saviour's Evangelical Lutheran Church Elca, East Bethel / Plymouth Community Radio, Plymouth / Prospect Park and E. River Road Improvement Association, Minneapolis / Rivercentre, St. Paul / Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Stillwater / Southeast Asian Ministry, St. Paul / St. John's University, Collegeville / Telecommunication Access Corporation, St. Paul / Thunderhawk Broadcasting, Montevideo / United Cambodian / Association of Minnesota, St. Paul / Veterans for Peace, Minneapolis / Vietnamese Minnesotans Association, St. Paul / Washington County Public Radio Company, Woodbury / We Win Institute, Minneapolis / West Side Citizens / Organization, St. Paul / Women Against Military Madness, Minneapolis / Women's Association of Hmong and Lao, St. Paul (partial list)

Source: Federal Communications Commission. Listing does not imply endorsement of this advertisement by the applicant nor endorsement of specific applications by the advertisement's sponsors.



1) RULE OR EXCEPTION?

Amount contributed to Senator Grams by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) in the 2000 election cycle: \$7,000.

Number of bills favored by the NAB which Senator Grams is sponsoring: 1.

Number of times Senator Grams sponsored bills favored by the NAB before it contributed \$7,000 to his campaign: 0.

Total contributed to Senator Grams so far this election cycle by banking, insurance, and real estate interests he deals with in committee: \$432,263.

Senator Rod Grams: U.S. Senate, Washington, DC 20510

The bill you have sponsored at the behest of the National Association of Broadcasters is a transparent attempt to smother low-power FM, denying a wide range of legitimate non-profits, both urban and rural, the chance to serve their constituents and communities. I strongly urge you to withdraw your sponsorship from this egregious legislation and support low-power FM.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY / STATE / ZIP _____

Help prove that money isn't the only thing that talks in Minnesota. Help save non-commercial radio.