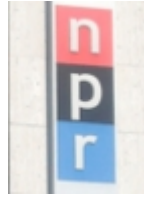




Written by [Daniel Sayani](#) on March 18, 2011

Some Republicans Defend NPR Funding

National Public Radio (NPR) is one of America's most reviled institutions among conservatives. The taxpayer-funded federal agency, which broadcasts in every state, is biased in its scope of programming, featuring a slate of exclusively left-wing commentators and hosts who have made their philosophies known throughout their various media appearances. Despite being paid for by all American taxpayers, NPR features programming that the average American has little use or patience for. NPR has failed to understand the basic principles of supply and demand — while a media outlet logically should feature programming that its benefactors (in this instance, the taxpayers) find interesting and would support, NPR does not appeal to a diverse cross-section of the American populace.



Instead, NPR is widely regarded as an exclusive, [elitist](#), and snobbish institution target marketing those with tastes similar to the left-of-center NYC Upper West Side schoolteachers, psychologists, social workers, college professors, and other white-collar bureaucrats who, like NPR, rely on the "tit of the state" (to quote Charles Krauthammer) and the coercive muscle of labor unions for their salaries and benefits. According to market research, the typical NPR listener is white, upper-middle class (making above \$90,000 per year), at least 50 years old, has a job in academia, education, human services, law, or other such fields, and holds at least one Masters degree or higher. [Four out of five](#) NPR listeners would choose to drive an eco-friendly hybrid automobile, and almost half own cars that cost them more than \$30,000. They are also 78 percent more likely to identify themselves as liberal, 97 percent more likely to belong to a country club, 68 percent more likely to use soy milk, 92 percent more likely to shop at Nordstrom or Neiman Marcus, and 56 percent more likely to hire a live-in housekeeper than the average American. NPR even once broadcast a segment entitled "[In Defense of Elitism.](#)"

In addition to its elitist and liberal leanings, NPR also has a strong, identifiable liberal bias in its broadcasting. In [October 2010](#), NPR accepted a \$1.8 million grant from the Open Society Institute of George Soros, which has financed socialist uprisings around the world and other radical causes, and NPR's former CEO, Ronald Schiller, accused Tea Party Republicans of being racists" and "xenophobes." A 2005 study conducted by UCLA and University of Missouri researchers found NPR's main newscast, *Morning Edition*, to be more liberal than the average Republican listener, putting it on the same ideological footing as publications such as *Newsweek* and the *Washington Post*.

One of the most egregiously liberal NPR apologists has been its columnist [Nina Totenberg](#), a legal analyst. Aside from her support of the firing of former NPR analyst Juan Williams (hardly a conservative), [Totenberg](#) has said the following:



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On April 17, 2009, she [accused](#) the Tea Party of being a Republican stunt. This past December, she effectively compared the Christian holiday Christmas to a curse word, [saying](#), I was invited to, forgive-the-expression, a Christmas party. She decried the massacre at Fort Hood not out of grief for the families of the slain, but because she feared a right-wing attack against Muslims. She referred to Bill Clinton as the most gifted politician I've ever seen. Most shockingly, in 1995, she [wished](#) AIDS upon then-Senator Jesse Helms (who died in 2008) and his family members.

Considering these harsh truths, as well as NPR's bias against Republican-supported initiatives such as No Child Left Behind, the Iraq war, and almost daily smears against former President George W. Bush (not that these criticisms were without merit), one would wonder why any Republican elected official could support NPR, a media force which uses taxpayer funds to attack and smear Republicans of all persuasions while glorifying the left on a daily basis. NPR, however, has merited at least one prominent Republican supporter to date Georgia Senator [Saxby Chambliss](#) who defends its unconstitutional and biased programming on flimsy grounds. The only logical conclusion to be reached by his endorsement of NPR is that he deems it propitious to neutralize the American right and support institutions whose liberal bias props up left-wing politicians.

Chambliss offered the following [defense](#) of NPR in an interview with Denis O'Hayer on Atlanta Public Broadcasting Radio (WABE 90.1 FM), Georgia's local affiliate of NPR, in which the Senator [discussed](#) a campaign for reducing the national deficit an initiative he is leading alongside Virginia Democratic Senator Mark Warner:

O'Hayer: Since we're talking about funding and we're on an NPR affiliate, I can't let you go without asking you what you think about the idea of defunding NPR.

Chambliss: If you look at NPR versus particularly the overall public broadcasting issue, NPR doesn't generate income like the public broadcasting side does.

You know, an awful lot of conservatives listen to NPR. It provides a very valuable service. Should we maybe think about a reduction in that? Again, I think the sacrifice is going to have to be shared by NPR as well as others. But I think total elimination of funding is probably not the wisest thing to do.

Perhaps the conservatives in the Senator's patrician, Georgian genteel donor circles in the echelons of the Republican Establishment listen to NPR (as chances are that these Republicans fulfill the demographic criteria for a typical NPR listener, along the lines of income, occupation, race, and socioeconomic class), but statistics do not lie. NPR has been found to be just as liberal as *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and *U.S. News & World Report* media venues hardly amenable to conservatives and its typical listeners tend to lean liberal at a rate which far exceeds the general population as a whole.

One sees a clear example of a fundamental disconnect between Chambliss and the rank-and-file of conservatives who form the backbone of his constituent base in comparing his support for NPR with what conservative Georgia House Republicans are saying. For instance, Representative Tom Graves recently made the defunding of National Public Radio a topic of a fundraising letter. He [wrote](#):

I never listen to NPR. As I travel across Georgia, I tune in to hear Glenn Beck or Rush, Hannity or catch the news or just relax to good ole country music. NPR is too snooty for my taste.



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The politically correct drivel that passes for entertainment on NPR doesnt appeal to me. Plus Im probably like you and I believe that NPR is rightfully under fire from conservatives for firing Juan Williams for having the audacity to be conservative and appear on NPRs most hated rival, Fox News.

Whether NPR is on the air or not wouldnt matter to me except for this cold hard truth: Theyre funded with your tax dollars and mine.

The NPR types like to project the image of being all lovey-dovey, but when it comes to negative campaigning, theyre cruel, relentless, personal and fueled by a self-righteous disdain for anything and anybody conservative.

While Sen. Chambliss does currently have a 96 percent approval rating from the American Conservative Union and an 89 percent approval rating on *The New American* magazine's [Freedom Index](#), he is obviously removed from the popular sentiment and political culture shared by Georgia conservatives and Republicans, as well as conservatives around the country who resent their hard-earned taxpayer dollars financing a radio network which promotes an agenda that is un-American, unconstitutional, biased, inimical to their safety and interests, and [Gramscian](#) in its orientation and outlook. The average American, let alone the average conservative, would never support wishing AIDS upon an elder statesman, comparing Christmas to a curse word, or lauding folk singers who have been embraced by Fidel Castro, Hugo Chavez, and other third-world communist despots, such as NPRs [recent embrace](#) of folk singer Barbara Dane, who produced an album entitled *I Hate the Capitalist System*.

In addition, when HR 1076, legislation to cut off federal funding for NPR, came up for a vote yesterday, seven Republicans voted with Democrats against the measure. Of the seven, Hanna, Gibson, LaTourette, Reichert, and Tiberi are members of the [George Soros-funded](#) Republican Main Street Partnership (notably, Hanna voted against defunding Planned Parenthood, and Reichert was [one of eight Republicans](#) who voted in favor of cap-and-trade legislation):

- Rep. Richard Hanna (R-N.Y.)
- Rep. Chris Gibson (R-N.Y.)
- Rep. Robert Woodall (R-Ga.)
- Rep. Patrick Tiberi (R-Ohio)
- Rep. Dave Reichert (R-Wa.)
- Rep. Steven LaTourette (R-Ohio)
- Rep. Sean Duffey (R- Wis.)

Another defender of NPR from within the ranks of the Republican Party also emerged this past week. [Kevin Hassett](#), a former advisor to John McCains failed presidential campaigns in 2000 and 2008 and current Director of Economic Policy Studies at the American Enterprise Institute, argues that while he opposes the liberal bias at NPR in its news coverage, he sees merit in its non-news-related programming, and also sees economic potential and benefits from PBS and other publicly-funded arts, humanities, and cultural programming, despite the unconstitutional nature of such federal programs:

Republicans are wrong when they argue that there is no economic justification for government support of Sesame Street. Beginning with its initial airdate on PBS in 1969, it pioneered modern childrens programming by encapsulating early education concepts in a fun, theatrical wrapper. Theres clearly a role for the government to provide a public good when markets may fail to do so.

The key is that great art creates a public benefit that exceeds the private benefit. Shakespeare



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might have made some money from his plays, but the benefit to all future generations has clearly, vastly outstripped his own profit. Accordingly, one might expect public markets to under-produce great works of theater and art a solid justification for public support.

Public radio and television, then, are defensible to the extent that they serve the public good by enriching the arts. NPR and PBS, however, wandered far from this mission, providing news content that is mostly indistinguishable from that provided by left-leaning for-profit enterprises.

Public money for news programming cant be justified; nobody would seriously argue that the market fails to produce it. Elected officials should maintain support for public radio and television programming that focuses on arts and education while prohibiting the use of public funds to support news or commentary.

This way, Big Bird is safe and doesnt have to share his nest.

In addition, California Rep. David Dreier also defends NPR for the quality of what it produces, but boldly proclaims that because federal taxpayer-funding of public radio and television is unconstitutional, NPR should rely upon private philanthropic donations, [according to](#) the *Los Angeles Times*:

He professes his love for NPR's foreign coverage and says he detects no pronounced political bias. His favorite episode of the public radio series "This American Life" is the one about youthful misconceptions that finally get clarified.

Dreier, despite his cheerleading about what he hears and sees on public TV and radio, said the federal debt has simply grown too large, around \$14 trillion, to not make cuts in every corner of the budget.

Dreier believes taxpayers should be taken off the hook, with public broadcasting supported by "listeners-viewers like you," foundations and corporate donors. "I very much believe there are people who will provide voluntary support," Dreier said. "I want to find a way to form a post taxpayer-supported Corporation for Public Broadcasting."

Rep. Dreiers solution is constitutional, fiscally-sound, and well-reasoned, as it seeks to place NPR and PBS into the arena of the free market a position with which (now former) NPR executive Schiller also agreed, admitting that NPR would do better without federal funding. Likewise, if the approach of Congressman Ron Paul (R-Texas) were adopted which holds that there is nothing inherently wrong with any enterprise that should be private, and that if government were greatly scaled down and the income tax reduced to a bare-bones minimum, individuals would have the freedom to choose which endeavors to fund, such as NPR then they would therefore be in the economic position to freely donate to it.

Frum Forum columnist [Mark Yzaguirre](#) also notes that NPR should give up the struggle for federal funding, which is more trouble than its worth, because only two percent of its funding comes from the federal government and that to cling to this paltry two percent, NPR is frittering away its resources and cultural capital (and by extension, those of its supporters) chasing federal dollars that make up only a small part of its total revenue. Just as in the business world one must sometimes sacrifice a client company that is more trouble than it is worth, so too should NPR do away with taxpayer funds that make it a lightning rod for political debate and provide leverage to its political and cultural adversaries during the budget process. As long as NPR takes a single dollar from the U.S. government, it will be forced to cater to congressional Republicans, who know that it is a convenient target in the culture war, and who can never be appeased by NPR.



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Failing to realize these truths, however, a colleague of Senator Chambliss, [moderate](#) Indiana Senator Richard Lugar, continues to defend NPR funding. Lugar says that debates over public broadcasting funding are a sideshow. Lugar spokesman Mark Helmke observes, "It's a diversion from focusing on the really big issues." "[Senator Lugar] has said we really need to focus on the big issues the defense budget and entitlements."

Sen. Chambliss would be better off rejecting Lugar's posture in favor of that of Rep. Dreier, whose approach is sensible and focuses on the hard facts, as opposed to the fluff of the culture wars. Chambliss would be best off following the example of a conservative Georgia lawmaker of the past Rep. Larry McDonald, former chairman of The John Birch Society, who always asked himself before voting on a bill: (a) "Is it constitutional?" (b) "Can government afford it?" and (c) "Will it benefit his constituents?" Sadly, Chambliss' defense of NPR funding meets none of these requirements, and constitutes a major faux pas, culturally and economically, in a political climate that looks with disfavor on NPRs characteristic liberal elitism.



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