



7th Congressional District News Indecent Radio, Television Deserve Increased Fines

Representative Mike Ferguson

WASHINGTON - Saying broadcasters that use the public airwaves have a public trust not to transmit indecent material, Rep. Mike Ferguson (R-District 7), on Wednesday joined a bipartisan majority in the House and voted to dramatically increase federal fines for indecent television and radio programming.

The legislation, H.R. 310, won House approval 389-38. It now moves to the Senate for further consideration. The measure would raise fines the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) can issue for indecent behavior in radio or television programs to \$500,000.

It would apply to both broadcasters, who under current law can be fined up to \$32,500 per incident, and performers, who can currently be fined up to \$11,000.

Mr. Ferguson serves on the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Telecommunications, which first approved the bill last month. During House consideration of the bill, he said the legislation creates incentives for broadcasters to better monitor their programming content.

"While I ultimately believe it's parents' responsibility to closely monitor what their children watch on tele-

vision, it's difficult even for conscientious parents when programs that feature explicit language or subject matter are shown during times when children are commonly watching television," Rep. Ferguson said on the House floor. "Parents are often in the position of having to be reactive, hoping that children won't fall victim to offensive images and words on their TVs. Congress must act to ensure that the FCC has the tools to prevent offensive images in our living rooms, and I believe we have done so with this bill."

In addition to raising fines, the legislation would require the FCC to consider revoking a station's broadcast license after three violations, and it also would mandate that FCC act on consumer indecency complaints within 180 days.

In other news, on February 22, Rep. Ferguson announced that Congress recently approved his request of \$200,000 for the Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey's Natural Occurring Retirement Communities in Clark. The funding will aid NORC's services such as social work, personal care and home support, transportation, home delivered meals and health prevention.



HIGHEST ACHIEVEMENT... On February 17, Cub Scout Pack No. 172 at Franklin Elementary School in Westfield, honored five of its scouts with the Arrow of Light Ceremony. The ceremony recognizes a Cub Scout's highest achievement. It is the culmination of his five years of Cub Scout eligibility and advancement. The boys received letters of congratulations from Mayor Gregory McDermott and will continue their experiences at local Boy Scout troops. Pictured, left to right, are: Connor Burslem, Solomon Orbach, Ryan Fleming, Matthew Hall and Kieran Windorf.

WF Councilman's Father Seeks Mayoral Nod in NY

NEWBURY, N.Y. — In an election to be held on Tuesday, March 15, Paul Echausse, the father of Westfield First Ward Councilman Peter Echausse will be seeking the mayoral nod in the Village of Newbury, N.Y.

Mr. Echausse has been a Village Trustee for over 20 years. He is running against an incumbent mayor who has served in that capacity for over 20 years. The mayor had intended originally to serve two terms (eight years).

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Forrester Questions Corzine On Pay-to-Play Legislation

Editor's Note: This is an open letter from Republican candidate for governor of New Jersey, Doug Forrester, to Jon Corzine, Democrat candidate for governor.

which is suing to keep pay-to-play legal in New Jersey.

Jon, I urge you to demand that Impact drop their lawsuit now or that you request your contribution be returned immediately. The Democratic leadership in Trenton, whom you have repeatedly praised over the years, is preventing pay-to-play reform, which indicates to me that your commitment to restoring ethics in government is remarkably convenient.

Dear Jon, I was surprised to see your announcement on PoliticsNJ.com. I have frequently expressed my belief that New Jersey needs meaningful pay-to-play reform. As recently as yesterday, I called on all legislators, regardless of party, to pass reform that includes a ban on the corrupt practice of wheeling.

I hope you agree that any measure must contain a prohibition on wheeling, which allows money to be scurrilously transferred throughout the state while circumventing the democratic process and campaign finance laws. Your call for reform is disconnected from your funding of Impact PAC,

The Republicans in the State Senate plan to return on February 28 and pass real pay-to-play legislation which, against the objections of the Democratic Party bosses, includes a ban on wheeling. As leaders of our parties, I urge you to join me today in standing up and calling on all legislators to finally pass the long overdue reform that the families of New Jersey deserve.

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Dedicated Funding Source Is Sought for NJ Transit

TRENTON — Representatives from the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Sierra Club, and New Jersey Citizen Action met at Newark Penn Station February 15 to call on New Jersey's elected officials to create a dedicated funding source for NJ Transit.

NJ Transit is the largest transit system in the country that does not have a dedicated fund to help pay for its operating expenses, according to the groups.

Jack Lettiere, New Jersey Commissioner of Transportation, and George Warrington, Executive Director for NJ Transit, have both said that the proposed fare hike, which looks to increase fares an average of 13 percent, is the first of several needed to return NJ Transit to solid fiscal footing.

NJ Transit must take money out of its capital program to pay for operating costs, threatening future transit projects, construction, and equipment.

"A fare hike is essentially a tax hike targeted at those who use transit," explained Damien Newton of the Tri-State Transportation Campaign. "NJ Transit riders should not be forced to

pay higher fares when the state is not holding its end of the bargain."

The groups called on Acting Governor Richard Codey and state elected officials to use the state's Transportation Trust to create a stable funding source for NJ Transit operations.

The state estimates that transit will experience a 3 percent drop in ridership as a result of the fare hike. The higher fares could turn transit riders into car commuters, increasing air pollution, road wear and congestion, officials said.

"Every time we increase transit fares, it means more air pollution and more sprawl. As prices of transit go up, more people take their cars and more people move further away from transit lines," said Jeff Tittel, Director of Sierra Club's New Jersey Chapter.

The Tri-State Transportation Campaign is an alliance of public interest, transit advocacy, planning and environmental organizations working to reverse deepening automobile dependence and sprawl development in the metropolitan region.

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