

Atlanta
Public Radio
Initiative

Status Report

**9/11 Commission/National Security
Advisor Coverage
President Bush Press Conference
Coverage
Citizens' Advisory Committee
Report**

Prepared for April 29, 2004
AETC Board Meeting

About Atlanta Public Radio Initiative

The Atlanta Public Radio Initiative (APRI) is an organization of Atlanta area residents who are strong supporters of public radio but believe the programming schedule of WABE suffers from a lack of shows devoted to intelligent dialogue about national and international issues.

APRI is not urging WABE to eliminate its music programming and switch to an all-news/discussion format. However, we do believe the station would achieve a better programming balance if it were to add more NPR shows which feature informed discussion of matters such as education, the economy, the environment, technology, taxes, terrorism, and foreign policy.

APRI currently has approximately 500 members who have signed a petition agreeing with our goals.

Status Report for April 2004

This report consists of three sections:

- 1) Our thanks to WABE for carrying the National Security Advisor's testimony before the 9/11 Commission
- 2) The unfortunate, abrupt ending of coverage of President Bush's press conference
- 3) A report on the inaugural meeting of the Citizens' Advisory Committee

Coverage of the National Security Advisor's Testimony Before the 9/11 Commission

APRI is pleased to note that WABE decided to interrupt Second Cup for several hours to carry NPR's national coverage of Condoleezza Rice's testimony before the 9/11 Commission. This is precisely the kind of important, timely news programming we expect a Top 25-Market public radio station like WABE to carry.

We are particularly encouraged that WABE avoided repeating its mistake of not carrying the NPR-sponsored Iowa Democratic Candidates' Debate in February.

WABE's Abrupt End to President Bush's Press Conference on April 13

As APRI members (and certainly thousands of other WABE supporters) were intently listening to the end of President Bush's press conference on Tuesday, April 13, we were especially pleased when the President said, "Okay one more question ... let's see - I haven't called on Don yet ..." and lo and behold, "Don" was NPR's own Don Gonyea! We were quite impressed and happy for "our" NPR.

But no sooner had Gonyea begun his question than the WABE announcer was cued to say, "It's now 9:31 ... our ASO broadcast now begins" - and that was the end of the press conference! We could not believe what we were hearing!

WABE unilaterally decided to end a *live* national press conference - when the President himself had just said it was the last question, which clearly indicated his remarks would be over in three or four minutes. The station had some eight hours of musical programming in which to make up those three or four minutes; deleting just one selection would have done the trick.

At least one APRI member wrote an email to WABE Program Director Lois Reitzes expressing his extreme dismay at the station's action. Here was her response:

Thanks for your comments, Mr. Mitchell. You have every reason to be disappointed about the way in which the person on board handled (or mishandled) the transition from live to recorded programming. It showed poor judgment, when the situation didn't even call for judgment, since the directive was to carry the entire press conference and whatever wrap-up followed from the NPR anchors. Ironic that it was Don Gonyea's question that got cut off!

But even worse was not being able to hear the entire event, since its importance was the reason for breaking format to begin with. As for the ASO, it could have begun as late as 10:30, and still aired in its entirety. The board operator has been made aware of the seriousness of his error, and I can only offer my deepest apologies for the abrupt way in which the program ended.

Sincerely,

Lois Reitzes

Inaugural Meeting of the AETC Citizens' Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC), chaired by Chuck Taylor, held its first meeting on April 27.

APRI's representative on CAC, Andrew Altman, attended the meeting, at which Milton Clipper thanked the members of the committee for their service and gave them their charge. The core of that charge is to reach out into the community for ideas and comments about PBA programming for both radio and television and to formulate recommendations regarding how the programming can better serve the public good.

It is APRI's expectation that CAC will operate in an unbiased and evenhanded manner, and issue its recommendations on the basis of all information reasonably regarded as relevant to its mission.

APRI has asked our representative to provide us with regular reports on the progress of CAC.