

It isn't the same 1040 WHO Radio I grew up with

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From today's email newsletter. Subscribe to our email newsletter [HERE](#) or send me your email address to jacob@theiowastandard.com!

Good morning! Another week is half over and we're exactly two weeks away from Christmas! Hard to believe. WARNING! This is a long newsletter, but honestly, I believe it's actually good and potentially thought-provoking. I apologize for the length, but I encourage you to read and share it!

Having grown up in Des Moines, I listened to a lot of 1040 WHO Radio growing up. Heck, I may have listened to more 1040 WHO Radio than anyone else at my school based on our politics.

Between Jan Mickelson and Steve Deace, I can confidently say I was exposed to two pretty unique perspectives — and definitely for the better. There's no way to possibly use the word "establishment" to describe Mickelson or Deace. What made them unique was their independent thought and willingness to call a spade a spade.

Those kinds of influences do not exist on 1040 WHO Radio today, however.

The host in the morning is a former state senator who voted to include sexual orientation and gender identity in the civil rights code — in 2007 — when he was in the Iowa Senate. Slight difference from the legendary Jan Mickelson.

And on Monday, the afternoon host ran interference for Sen. Joni Ernst.

I appreciate the opportunities I've had to be on Simon Conway's show. I don't have any personal animosity toward him. We have differences in how we approach things, but I am fine with differences of strategy.

During his opening on Monday, though, it revealed far more than just a difference of strategy. Simon seemed genuinely irritated with people who are calling for Ernst to have a primary opponent.

"There's a lot of people that frankly want to run their mouths," Conway said. "And there are a lot of people that really dislike Joni Ernst. That believe she's not a conservative, she's a RINO, she's establishment, she's not MAGA. All the things that they say to me. OK, 'Someone should primary her!' OK, why not you? See, this is the part I don't get. 'Someone needs to do what I say they should do.' Well, why don't you do it?"

Let's stop here first. A lot of people analyze the job elected officials are doing — some even make a living doing it on the radio. When "The People" choose to be critical of an elected official, they aren't "running their mouths," they are voicing their opinion. We need more of that, not less.

Second, I don't believe there are people who "really dislike" Joni Ernst. I am at least not aware of any. But I do know there are constituents who do not like Joni Ernst's voting record. For example, Ernst has a 42 percent from Heritage Action for her voting record this session. Guess who has a 46 percent? Bernie Sanders. You can check the scores and the votes Heritage Action has scored here:

Ernst's score

Bernie's score

Based on her voting record...based on her saying Donald Trump holds responsibility for Jan. 6...based on the fact she was censured or condemned by at least 17 Iowa GOP county central committees...based on the fact she called Nikki Haley the “total package” during the caucus...based on the fact she said the issue of reparations for slavery is “complex and complicated”...based on — well, seriously, if you missed that newsletter you can read about her record and her rhetoric [here](#).

So, yes, based on all of those facts, it is fair for at least some Iowans to believe she isn't conservative, she isn't MAGA and she is establishment. It's almost laughable someone would try to claim she isn't establishment. I struggle to think how that could even begin to be debated.

People are publicly stating someone should primary Ernst. But most people cannot run for U.S. Senate themselves for countless reasons. But they should most certainly be allowed and encouraged to issue a public statement encouraging someone with the desire, the means and the opportunity to take a shot.

Simon then suggested if someone saying Ernst should be primaried would actually primary her, someone with a better chance of winning might jump in. Well, if anyone is serious about wanting to primary Ernst, they should do so because they're serious about winning. And anyone with a basic level of understanding of how this works would need it to be a one-on-one. The more challengers, the more the anti-establishment vote gets split and the less likely it is the challenged would succeed.

Simon then says Ernst never said she wouldn't support Pete Hegseth's nomination. I'm not aware of anyone making that claim — though it is possible some did because I don't follow every person's social media. What I do know is Ernst refused to say she did support Hegseth's nomination until Monday when she offered soft support for Hegseth “through the process.”

Even before this Hegseth drama, Ernst was listed as one of nine GOP senators most likely to be a potential roadblock for Trump nominees by The Hill. It hasn't exactly been a secret she is “one to watch” through this process for Trump supporters.

Then it became a lecture that the Republican Party of Iowa would be proud of.

“You see, we live in a world, right now, where you should be voting frankly for the person that's most politically aligned with you,” he said. “That's who your candidate should be. And if that's not Joni Ernst, it's certainly not going to be the Democrat. Right? So I don't know how you deal with this particularly, I'm just a realist.”

He then talked about how people who may want to be the next senator are confident Sen. Chuck Grassley will resign before his term is up or will not run again and they are waiting for that opportunity.

Just for the record, this is another difference in strategy. I strongly believe serving in office should be based on a calling not based on a political opportunity. I think the best people to serve are those called to office regardless of circumstance. And I don't think "the call" to serve should be based on Chuck Grassley's decision, it should be based on whether someone feels God has called them to run.

A caller told Simon about a telephone poll asking about Ernst and Simon speculated that could have come from "the other side." Well, Victory Insights revealed it conducted a poll so that answered that. But then Simon provided this line:

"Believe me when I tell you, you may not like her, but the incumbent is almost certainly going to be better than the Democrat."

After a commercial break, Simon returned with another round of blasting people calling for a primary who aren't willing to primary her themselves.

"Uh-huh. It's not as easy as it sounds, is it?"

Then Simon asked what would happen if Ernst is the nominee. I'm not aware if Simon is aware, I know he's a proponent of term limits, but Ernst said during a debate in 2014 that she promised to serve just two terms, 12 years. So how could she be the nominee in 2026? Perhaps he can ask her next time she comes on his show.

He then said voters will only have a choice of two candidates — although a libertarian has said he is exploring a run.

"Your choice will be Joni Ernst or the Democrat," he said. "That's gonna be it. So who is going to vote more MAGA halfway through this President's final term, right? Who is going to be closer to Donald Trump than Joni Ernst? Is it going to be the Democrat? If (Ernst) is the nominee, is it going to be the Democrat? If your answer to that question is no, because of the way our system works, you kind of don't have a choice. You see, and if you withhold your vote from her, you're actually withholding your vote from Donald Trump. That's what you're doing."

I would argue this line of thinking — no matter how accurate it may be, that voters have just two choices — has gotten our country exactly where it is today. And I would argue our country isn't in a good place today. I would argue the two-party system has been a complete failure. This basic, kindergarten-level exercise of politics is not going to help save America. This basic, kindergarten-level exercise of politics is the reason America needs saving!

For too long people have "settled." They've been willing to be content. I mean, nothing in that quote speaks Spirit of 1776 to me. At all.

"You kind of don't have a choice...If you withhold your vote from her, you're actually withholding your vote from Donald Trump."

Your vote should not ever be something you give, it should always be earned. It also shouldn't be something expected of you. Or something that you owe one of the two political parties. That is honestly offensive to the value of a vote and the value of our freedom.

I'm a little more willing to use that strategy when we're talking about an executive position for a person who will make 100 percent of the decisions 100 percent of the time. But for one seat out of 100 or one seat out of 435, we shouldn't be so willing to simply settle.

We should all have a basic baseline that a candidate must meet to earn our vote. And that baseline could and should be different for each of us. But if that baseline is simply "be a Republican," well, that baseline will constantly shift. It's a baseline without a backbone. It's a baseline without principle. It's a baseline that's gotten us where we are today.

Simon then acknowledges he doesn't like how the system works, but because he is a realist that's how it works and we either have to embrace the system and work within it to try to change it or we don't.

"You can just whine about the situation," he said. "I genuinely, for real, don't get that. If you really don't like it, then you should work to change it. If you don't think you can change it, OK, that's a different conversation that we need to have."

I can tell you how the system won't change, by following the flow of the system. I believe the only way to actually change the system is to educate people about the system to a point where they demand it changes by those in the system. Is that going to be easy? No. But I don't believe there is any other way.

By the end, Simon admitted Ernst could be more conservative. He then said he has called her out on it in a couple of interviews, but he said there is no point in sitting there and whining about it. Repeating the phrase that someone needs to primary Ernst, he said, is not a "useful or helpful" road to be on. (To be fair, you can listen to Simon's full segment [here](#).)

The whole thing reminded me of the outrage Simon displayed when Jim Carlin accused members of the Iowa Legislature of being influenced by money. Simon seemed completely offended that Carlin would accuse politicians of being influenced by donors. I sincerely hope it was fake outrage, because that's hardly an accusation anyone was or should be shocked by.

Now, back to the point at hand. I would argue it is more helpful that promising your vote to the nominee simply because they have an R by their name. I don't see how that sort of loyalty and allegiance to a party or a person helps advance principles at all.

Listen, I know this next question I ask will make some of you uncomfortable, but I'm going to ask it anyway. And I don't need you to have the same answer as me...

Is a Democrat in office for two years that much worse than a squishy, moderate Republican for 12? Especially if after those two years of a Democrat we can get an actual conservative Republican for the next 10.

Now, in the U.S. Senate it would be a Democrat for six years, not two. So I would even have to give that more thought than I have.

Here is the problem — the system. The primary system is set up in a way that is rigged. It isn't supposed to be legitimate against incumbents. House members get about \$1.9 million for members allowance for various expenses. Some of those expenses include mailers and radio ads to highlight their work. They can't be campaign ads, but boy, they're pretty darn close. Senators get even more money for that.

That doesn't factor in the easy money members of Congress get from PACs, lobbyists and other special interests.

There's a reason Congress gets re-elected at a 95 percent clip despite a sub-20 percent approval.

Primary elections against incumbents at that level are nearly impossible to win. Not because "The People" are in love with their current representation, but because the system is stacked against a challenge.

And if the primary is going to be rigged beyond an ability to win, then according to the two-party system's logic, we have to just stomach what they want to offer us.

Welcome to a nation \$36.2 trillion in debt. That's how you get here, folks!

The idea of short-term pain for long-term gain isn't something many of us embrace. But short-term gain for long-term pain seems to stink too.

I don't know what the answer is, but I know what it isn't. The answer isn't Republicans who vote conservative 42 percent of the time. The answer isn't pale pastels.

If I'm being honest with you guys, I have to tell you, the system stinks and is set up against you. It really is. That whole members allowance thing passed in 1996 if you're wondering. That's why you get mail at your home or hear radio ads paid for by official U.S. House funds — which is you guys! You are paying for their ads promoting their work in office — but definitely not campaigning...(wink.)

If you're curious, the former afternoon radio host on 1040 WHO Radio — Steve Deace — actually said if Trump would support him he would challenge Joni Ernst. Deace said Ernst has been terrible. One of his cohorts, Todd Erzen, called Ernst "the most powerful Democrat in Iowa."

Look, I've tried to get interviews with certain Republican elected officials who will not give me the time of day because I don't go along with the tribalism of the two-party system. It is what it is. I get it. They don't want to legitimize someone who doesn't play their game at

the end of the day.

There is a real opportunity to speak truth to power provided by the blowtorch that is 1040 WHO Radio. I was fortunate that in my formative years, I could listen to Jan Mickelson and Steve Deace. People who were willing to challenge the system and challenge the status quo rather than encourage people to fall in line and accept it.

I also watched a lot of Bill O'Reilly. If I remember correctly, he'd often tell us to remember that the O'Reilly factor is "always looking out for you."

We need more of that from our traditional media, not less. It's one reason alternative media has increased in popularity. We do need media willing to look out for "The People," not defend moderate, disappointing politicians and the system that provides them protection.

The strategy I choose may not be the one you choose, and that's OK. But if the strategy of choice is "you don't have a choice," what kind of strategy is that? Well, it's the strategy that has us here.

After an off-air dust-up with Mitt Romney, Mickelson wrote a lengthy response to the situation way back at the time.

"I'm a litmus test voter," he wrote.

You know how we could make America Make Great Again? We could all be litmus test voters. It would help save us from a two-party system that constantly works against us.

When we face a system that is corrupt, we have two choices — follow the system or challenge it.

Want more of the same? Follow it. Want something better? Challenge it.

It is, always, your choice.

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