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AMANDA COWAN/Emerald

Bill Dwyer, a candidate for Lane County Commissioner, protested KODZ radio Thursday afternoon.

## Politician blasts radio station

Bill Dwyer, candidate for a county commissioner seat, said he was unfairly denied advertising space

By Michael Burnham  
Community Editor

About a dozen picketers gathered in support of Bill Dwyer outside of the KODZ "Oldies" radio station, 99.1 FM, Thursday afternoon after the candidate for Lane County Commissioner Seat 2 alleged the station practiced unfair tactics by denying him advertising time for his campaign.

Dwyer unsuccessfully attempted to purchase campaign advertising space on May 1 through his own campaign budget. He protested because his challenger, incumbent

Steve Cornacchia, currently receives on-air advertising that is funded through the Committee for Springfield, a local political-action committee.

Dwyer said the station denied him advertising time because it claimed it does not furnish advertising space when a local politician is directly responsible for the purchase of the advertisement.

"I told them I thought they were being unfair to allow my opponent access to the airwaves," Dwyer said. "I'm not going to allow it."

Dwyer carried a sign that read "What happened to free speech?" as he walked in the rain with the small crowd of picketers on the station's front sidewalk.

"I'll be out here every day until the election," he said.

But Dwyer's allegations and the protesters outside drew little response from those within the station, and one office worker even asked her co-workers why the picketers were there.

KODZ station manager Dave Woodward was unavailable for comment.

However, Dwyer's allegations prompted the station's attorneys to draft a letter in response to a letter Dwyer submitted earlier in the day. Dwyer's letter blasted the station, threatening "whatever legal action necessary to protect [himself] and the public from apparent favoritism."

Dom Monahan, who is responsible for drafting the response from the law firm of Luvaas, Cobb, Richards & Fraser, said the station has a legal right to deny Dwyer advertising space. The firm also represents two other radio stations that practice the same policy as KODZ, forming what the firm refers to as "The Stations."

"The Stations' policy has been, and is, that they will not sell political time to local candidates seeking public office," he said in the letter.

However, he added that "this policy has never been extended to groups seeking broadcast time relating to ballot measures or advocacy groups for legally qualified candidates."

He noted that Federal Communications Commission laws require radio stations to provide air space for all federal campaigns upon request, but the law does not go so far as to cover local campaigns.

Monahan added that Cornacchia's advertisements are legally validated by an FCC act because his voice did not appear in the advertisements, and he did not purchase the ads himself.

Although Monahan said in the letter that the broadcasting corporation that licenses the three stations will not alter its policy, he did say that KODZ would provide advertising space for any supporters of Dwyer's campaign. He said this would place Dwyer's advertisements on a comparable basis as those furnished to the Committee for Springfield.

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