

Letter: KOWL defends programming switch

To the community,

KOWL 1490 AM "Tahoe's Talk" was one of the original Rush Limbaugh affiliates from his days being based out of this region in Sacramento.

KOWL canceled the Rush Limbaugh show and it is off air as of this week. As the station owner and GM I made the decision. This was done for economic reasons and not for political reasons. I spent several years as the morning show host on KOWL and was well known as "lefty liberal". However, I would often defend Rush Limbaugh on air as having the right to say what he wants to say as this is America and we have that freedom. He spoke out against a society where everyone boycotts everyone else that offends them.

I repeatedly said that it should be up to the free market and not a knee-jerk reaction to someone's opinion. And now the free market has spoken. Rush has repelled local, regional, and national advertisers from KOWL costing the stations thousands of dollars in advertisers. Since KOWL is a small unrated market, advertisers would rather just avoid the whole station than take the risk of being associated with Rush's increasingly toxic brand.

In addition to that, Rush Limbaugh is one of the only shows in radio to charge a monthly fee to affiliates. I spent a lot of time negotiating directly with Limbaugh's syndicator. I told them that we didn't want to lose his show, but that we couldn't pay him a fee in addition to him losing us money repelling advertisers and they refused to drop the monthly fee. Ironically, they lost the fee anyway and a long time affiliate. I really don't understand why they forced our hand

like this, it's now a lose-lose situation.

As further proof that I did not do this for political reasons, I replaced Limbaugh with another prominent conservative who does not charge a monthly fee and is not on the radio industry "controversial programming list" that advertisers avoid: "The Dennis Prager Show". Prager now airs live on KOWL from 9am-noon Monday-Friday in the same spot that Limbaugh occupied for well over 20 years.

KOWL is a news-talk station that represents a variety of opinions from across the political spectrum with national shows. We have live local news each weekday morning and CBS news at the top of every hour. We thank Rush Limbaugh for his years of representing the conservative side and now hand that torch off to Dennis Prager.

Steve Harness, KOWL owner-general manager