

What's so hot about Fox?

Contributed by Michael Zahara

To win the West, Democrats need to attract 'squishy middle-of-the-road' voters, not hard-core cable news watchers

Guest commentary

by Michael Zahara

02/28/07

I come from the school of the politically practical and pragmatic. "Know your voters, know your opponent" was the constant mantra I was taught years ago.

It is relatively rare that I am in complete agreement with the liberal wing of my own party, but on this matter they, not we, are absolutely correct.

In the case of the decision to include FOX News in our partisan pre-caucus debate this August, apparently those who made this decision forgot who and what FOX News is and who and what our opponents are. This was not a NV Dems decision, this was a unilateral move without the consultation of the Executive Board of the Democratic Party of the State of Nevada, nor the executive boards of the other sponsor states.

FOX News is not news, it's an entertainment channel watched by somewhere between four and seven million people per day, including Democrats and including me. More people watch reruns of "Friends" than tune into cable news in most markets.

Especially after the network's conduct in broadcasting a debate in Maryland, it is the epitome of naiveté to even consider including them in our partisan pre-caucus debate in Reno. Roger Ailes and Rupert Murdoch had to have been high-fiving each other over this coup over Harry Reid and the state of Nevada. National Republican operatives have to be giddy and gleeful with this major misstep from Nevada, home state of their enemy, Sen. Harry Reid, whom they loathe even more than they loathed Tom Daschle.

This decision all but guarantees the early caucus will be a one-shot deal for Nevada and that the DNC will move to a Western Primary state in 2012.

Let's not fool ourselves; this is all about Harry Reid to FOX News. They don't give a damn about our debate; this is all to embarrass Nevada, our candidates and especially to embarrass Harry Reid.

The secondary background pieces they will do pre- and post-debate will be disastrous to the intent of including them and

will provide months and months of fodder for their talking heads and their largely GOP 'red meat' viewership. The fuel for MoveOn, DailyKos and other efforts against this idea were very likely planted by campaign operatives of our own candidates who were in the loop on this long before any of us at NV Dems were. No professional political operative would want their top-tier candidate to participate in a Democratic highly partisan event hosted by FOX News.

We got 'out-foxed' by FOX News and the RNC. I've known for a few decades that there are many wings to our party, but until this ill-conceived decision, I had no idea there was also a masochist wing.

We don't grow our voter base by including highly partisan FOX News in our own partisan pre-caucus debate mix. We grow it by actually working the Western states for the first time in decades and our candidates have all pledged to do just that.

This past November taught us that it is the squishy middle-of-the-road, thoughtful, non-party committed voter that we need to attract, not the hard partisans of the other major political party on their own propaganda network. FOX News viewers will tune into our debates no matter who the network carrier is, if they are so inclined.

We need to protect the best interests of our candidates and either find another network, don't broadcast at all, or cancel the event. The stakes are far too high and the potential for disaster far too great to experiment with playing on the other team's playing field for our Democratic Party partisan pre-caucus debate events.

The sooner we get out of this agreement, the better for everyone involved except FOX News, its parent News Corporation, and the Republican National Committee.

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