

Limbaugh Says His Apology To Student Was Sincere

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Radio host Rush Limbaugh said his apology to the Georgetown law student he called a “slut” was sincere but also joked that he, too, got a busy signal Monday when he called the show to join the growing roster of advertisers abandoning it.

The student, Sandra Fluke, said Limbaugh’s apology did nothing to change the corrosive tone of the debate over health care coverage and that Americans have to decide whether they want to support companies that continue to advertise on his program. AOL and Tax Resolution Services Co. on Monday became the eighth and ninth advertisers to leave Limbaugh’s three-hour show and at least one radio station dropped the program as he sought to stem the exodus of advertisers and fellow conservatives declined to offer him support.

“I should not have used the language I did, and it was wrong,” a rarely contrite Limbaugh told listeners.

But callers to the show urged him not to give in to critics, which now include Republican leaders in Congress and those seeking the GOP presidential nomination. He blamed the media for the pressure.

“Talk about a double standard,” Limbaugh said. “Rappers can say anything they want about women. It’s called art. And they win awards.”

Fluke, who testified to congressional Democrats in support of their national health care policy that would compel her Jesuit college’s health plan to cover her birth control, said she had not heard from Limbaugh directly but signaled she had little interest in speaking with him. She said his criticism of her beliefs was an attack on women’s health.

“I think any woman who has ever been called these types of names is (shocked) at first,” Fluke told ABC’s “The View.”

“But then I tried to see this for what it is, and I believe that what it is, is an attempt to silence me, to silence the millions of women and the men who support them who have been speaking out about this issue and conveying that contraception is an important health care need that they need to have met in an affordable, accessible way.”



Limbaugh

invited her back and she spoke to the Democratic lawmakers at an unofficial session.

The issue has been much debated in the presidential race, with Republican candidates particularly criticizing President Barack Obama’s requirements on such employers as Catholic hospitals. Democrats — and many Republican leaders, too — have suggested the issue could energize women to vote for Obama and other Democrats in November.

Sen. John McCain, the GOP’s 2008 presidential nominee, told CBS News on Monday that Limbaugh’s statements were unacceptable “in every way” and “should be condemned” by people across the political spectrum. Republican presidential contender Newt Gingrich said it is “silly” to suggest that Limbaugh speaks for the party.

Limbaugh, even as he retreated from his earlier characterization of Fluke as a “slut” and “prostitute,” insisted the 30-year-old was trying to “force a religious institution to abandon its principles to meet hers.”

“Those two words were inappropriate. They were uncalled for,” he said of his initial comments that roiled his critics. “They distracted from the point that I was actually trying to make.”

Even so, eight companies now have stopped advertising on Limbaugh’s program on Clear Channel’s Premiere Radio Networks Inc. The parent company is supporting Limbaugh, whose on-air contract with Premiere runs through 2016. A Hawaii radio station on Monday announced it would no longer air Limbaugh’s show.

“Regardless of one’s political views on the issue being discussed, we feel the delivery was degrading and the continued comments over several days to be egregious. As a result, we are discontinuing the Rush Limbaugh program on KPUA effective

immediately,” New West president and general manager Chris Leonard said in a statement.

AOL said Monday that Limbaugh’s messages “are not in line with our values.”

ProFlowers, mortgage lender Quicken Loans, mattress retailers Sleep Train and Sleep Number, software maker Citrix Systems Inc., online data backup service provider Carbonite and the online legal document services company LegalZoom also left Limbaugh’s roster of advertisers. Allstate Insurance said on its Facebook page that it didn’t even know it was advertising on Limbaugh’s show and that it was correcting a media buy error by discontinuing its advertising there.

At the Pentagon, spokesman George Little said the military’s network will continue to air Lim-

baugh’s radio program and that he is unaware of any plans to review that decision.

The American Forces Network has consistently defended its inclusion of Limbaugh saying its programming reflects what the audience could hear at home, and that it doesn’t try to protect listeners from views with which they may disagree.

A 100,000-member veterans group, VoteVets.org, said it will be launching a petition Tuesday, calling on the Pentagon to take Limbaugh off the military’s network.

Limbaugh sought to find some humor in the situation.

“I called myself to cancel my advertising. I got a busy signal,” he deadpanned at the start of Monday’s program.

Yet, he appeared defiant and suggested he’d have little trouble

finding new sponsors.

“I reject millions of dollars of advertisers a year much to the chagrin of my hard-working sales staff,” Limbaugh said.

The tumult began last week when Limbaugh discounted Fluke’s appearance on Capitol Hill.

He said last Wednesday: “What does it say about the college coed ... who goes before a congressional committee and essentially says that she must be paid to have sex? It makes her a slut, right? It makes her a prostitute. She wants to be paid to have sex.”

He dug in a day later, refusing to give ground.

“If we’re going to have to pay for this, then we want something in return, Ms. Fluke,” Limbaugh said. “And that would be the videos of all this sex posted online so we can see what we’re getting for our

money.”

On Friday, still defiant even after Democrats beat back Republican challenges to the new health care requirement, Limbaugh scoffed at the Democrats’ talk of a conservative “war on women.”

Obama, aware of the political advantages of branding all conservatives as supporters of Limbaugh’s views, telephoned Fluke from the Oval Office on Friday to offer his support.

A day later, Limbaugh apologized in writing to Fluke.

Yet even on Monday, Limbaugh didn’t back away from his criticism of Fluke’s appearance on Capitol Hill. He questioned why she was invited testify.

“She doesn’t have any expertise,” Limbaugh said during the second hour of his radio show.

Study: Calif. Cellphone Restrictions Reduce Deaths

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — California’s nearly four-year-old ban on drivers using handheld cellphones is saving lives, according to a University of California, Berkeley, study released Monday.

The study found that overall traffic deaths dropped 22 percent, while deaths blamed on drivers using hand-held cellphones were down 47 percent. Deaths among drivers who use hands-free phones dropped at a similar rate.

The university’s State Transportation Research and Education Center examined deaths for two years before and two years after the cellphone ban took effect in July 2008. It found a similar drop in injuries attributed to drivers’ cellphone use.

The number of deaths among drivers using hand-held phones fell from 100 to 53 during that period, while the number of injuries dropped from 7,720 to 3,862.

The California Office of Traffic Safety, which sought the study, said deaths and injuries are declining in part because of an overall decrease in drivers using cellphones.

An unrelated survey commissioned by the state last summer found 40 percent of drivers say they talk less while driving since the ban took effect, even if they have a legal hands-free device.

The California survey, which included 1,801 drivers 18 and over at gas stations in 15 counties, tracked a similar finding in 2010 by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The institute’s survey found that 44 percent of drivers in states with cellphone bans said they don’t use their phones while driving, compared with 30 percent in states that let drivers use hand-held cellphones.

Two previous studies, one by the nonprofit RAND Corp. and another by an affiliate of the insurance institute, found no overall reduction in vehicle crashes after

the cellphone law took effect. The university said its study is the first to look specifically at collisions involving cellphone use.

The university findings surprised neither critics nor supporters of the state law.

“When you ban something, you’re going to have less of it,” said Sen. Doug LaMalfa, R-Willows. “Of course the numbers are going to go down.”

Instead of looking for illegal cellphone use, LaMalfa said police should be on watch for erratic drivers no matter if they are distracted by cellphones, putting on makeup, shaving, or changing compact discs in a stereo system.

The Department of Motor Vehicles reported 460,487 handheld cellphone convictions last year, up 52 percent from the 301,833 convictions in 2009.

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Dakota Territorial Museum
Wednesday, March 7
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YHS Students & Activities
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