

Candidacy statement for Randall Cotton

We are fortunate, here in East Central Illinois, to have community radio resources in our area (a regrettably rare circumstance in the United States). Some have made the argument that since community radio is uncommon, and we are lucky to have it in our corner of the Midwest, that WEFT should be accepted as is, should not be changed and should not be criticized, for however inadequate WEFT might be, at least it still exists. However, mere existence is a poor measure by which to judge the benefit, success and strength of the station. We should aspire to much more than simply avoiding demise. Instead, we should be constantly striving to strengthen, grow and evolve the station, not only so that the community would be better served, but also so that the station might be better able to withstand any future threatening adversity.

In recent years, it has become clear that WEFT leaves much to be desired and the station is losing substantial support in the community. The most recent on-air pledge drive brought in 38% less in pledges than the previous one (\$15,105.70 in February 2008 vs. \$24,541.40 in May 2007, both over two-week periods). Looking back further, we now bring in 53% less in pledges than we did a few years back (\$15,105.70 in 14 days for February 2008 vs. 30,096.00 in 13 days for October 2002). I think some of the problems causing this loss of support are:

1. The tampering with last year's election by the WEFT Board (resulting in a lawsuit by 16 WEFT Members).
2. The failure to finish sending out pledge drive premiums (such as CD's) from the Spring 2007 pledge drive for more than 8 months.
3. The failure to hold a pledge drive last Fall.
4. The poor management of underwriting (sponsorship by local businesses and organizations)
5. The ongoing violation of our Bylaws regarding financial and management matters
6. Censorship of criticism regarding these issues by shutting down the "wefta" electronic mailing list (including removal of 5 years of its archives)

I've been a WEFT listener for 21 years, a financial contributor for more than 10 years, a volunteer for almost 5 years and I served on the WEFT Board from 2004-2006. I am running for the Board again to help revitalize WEFT by:

1. Focusing on adherence to our Bylaws and the regulations of our major grantors such as the Corporation for Public Broadcasting
2. Establishing more integrity in our management and financial practices (including annual audits, which are required in our Bylaws but have never been performed)
3. Broadening volunteer participation
4. Strengthening the station's democracy through increased transparency and accountability

For more information on my candidacy and on some of the problems WEFT is facing these days, check out www.reformweft.org after May 28, 2008.

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