**Headline:** The Host of ‘The Attitude with Arnie Arnesen’ on Corporate Media Contamination, News Soundbites, and the Trump Administration’s Impact on Public Affairs Reporting

**Teaser:** “We have power. They’re afraid of us,” says politician-turned-talk-radio-personality “Arnie” Arnesen.

By Damon Orion

**Author Bio:** Damon Orion is a writer, journalist, musician, artist, and teacher in Santa Cruz, California. His work has appeared in Revolver, Guitar World, Spirituality + Health, Classic Rock, and other publications. Read more of his work at [DamonOrion.com](https://damonorion.com/).

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**[Article Body:]**

After serving as a member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives from 1984 to 1992, [Deborah “Arnie” Arnesen](https://womensmediacenter.com/shesource/expert/d.-arnie-arnesen) became the first major party female [nominee](https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/09/15/pocketbook-pol-figures-to-win/1830c0c9-40e6-4b8a-8f35-e79407aeec15/) for governor of New Hampshire. [According](https://iop.harvard.edu/fellows/deborah-arnie-arnesen) to the Institute of Politics at Harvard University, she got more votes in that election than any other Democratic candidate in New Hampshire’s history. Then, in 1996, she [ran](https://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1996/candidates/election.guide/text/NH02.shtml) for the 105th U.S. Congress from New Hampshire’s Second District.

Arnesen has also been a Harvard Institute of Politics fellow, a poverty worker, a [TV talk show host](https://womensmediacenter.com/profile/d.-arnie-arnesen), a [writer for the Boston Globe New Hampshire](https://www.linkedin.com/in/arnie-arnesen-744aa536/), a [regular](https://www.nhbr.com/on-the-air-with-arnie-arnesen/) on New England Cable News (NECN) and the MSNBC talk show “Hardball,” and, [since 2012](https://www.linkedin.com/in/arnie-arnesen-744aa536/), the host of the public affairs [radio show](https://www.wnhnfm.org/programs-2/attitude-w-arnie-arnesen/) and podcast “The Attitude with Arnie Arnesen.” Her bio on Podomatic [describes](https://www.podomatic.com/podcasts/staff74238) her as a “[r]ecovering politician” who interviews “progressive voices from politics, journalism, industry, and academia.”

Two well-known radio stations that broadcast “The Attitude” are Houston, Texas’s 100,000-watt [KPFT](https://kpft.org/) and New York City’s 50,000-watt [WBAI](https://wbai.org/). “Between Houston and New York, I have the biggest audience I’ve ever had, and I do it for nothing, five days a week because it’s what I believe in,” she says.

“The Attitude” also runs on several smaller stations in Seattle and West Virginia, outside of Pennsylvania, on Maui, and in Arnesen’s hometown of [Concord, New Hampshire](https://www.wnhnfm.org/programs-2/attitude-w-arnie-arnesen/).

“In a lot of ways, I’m like fairy dust: I’m everywhere and nowhere,” she says.

**Damon Orion: Tell me about making the transition to non-commercial radio.**

**Arnie Arnesen:** The last time I worked for a commercial station was in 2006. I got fired because the car, insurance, and pharmaceutical industries went to my station owners and said, “Take her off.” The reason was that I was speaking the truth. I wasn’t swearing, lying, or making shit up.

I’ll give you an example [of the information these industries didn’t want me to share]: [The earliest version of] the SUV was nothing more than a truck body with a car top. It got no mileage and wasn’t very safe. Why did we suddenly see this explosion of people buying SUVs? This is the homework I did. I found out that [salespeople] in the dealership would make more than twice as much money selling a compact as an SUV. I said to my audience, “Look, if you want [an SUV] and you need to move stuff out of the back forty or need to move animals, that makes sense, but to go grocery shopping or take your kids to school? What are you doing? Understand the motivation for you to get this gas guzzler and who buys ads on commercial radio.”

And then I would talk about the pharmaceutical industry and the insurance industry. So I got fired, and that evening was the New Hampshire Association of Broadcasters awards ceremony. My husband, who was still alive at the time, said, “We have to go.” I said, “I’m not going. I just got fired!” So he dragged me to this event. Of course, I can’t sit at the table with my station because I’ve been fired, so I was literally sitting against the back wall. Do you know why my husband dragged me there? Because I got Air Personality of the Year. Nobody could look at me because the message had been sent: “It is not about your talent or your radio ability. If you don’t genuflect to what the commercial investment folks are saying, you won’t have a job.”

Now I’m with Pacifica Network, where nobody gets paid, for the most part, and we’re committed to making sure people are entertained and informed. The goal isn’t about compensation—it’s about empowering people with knowledge. I’m here because nobody can fire me. That means I’m liberated to speak the truth. I’m not on MSNBC or CNN. I don’t have to worry about Disney.

**DO: Do you think the mainstream media’s reliance on sound bites has helped create a less informed public?**

**AA:** I think the problem with mainstream media is that they replace content with *safe* sound bites. Their sound bites aren’t provocative. They’re easy, predictable, and not as edgy as they need to be. For example, I look at what’s happening in my state now: We’re seeing [New Hampshire’s] revenue get smaller and smaller, but the story is not that the state will be spending less money—it’s what I call “shift and shaft,” because what they’re going to do now is shift responsibility from themselves onto every local community. “Shift and shaft” is fabulous as a sound bite, because [listeners] understand the word shaft, and then I take the time to explain what it means for them, and I do the math with them.

I [contributed] to an [article](https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/biden-reelection-forum/) for the Nation in 2023, begging Joe Biden not to run. I was treated like shit. You know what the title of [my part] was? “The Urgency of the Moment.” He could not meet the urgency of the moment. That’s a sound bite that demands content.

**DO: To what extent does personal slant color the content of public affairs podcasts and radio talk shows?**

I used to teach mass communications, and I would say, “Put your hands on either side of your arms, and I want you to look at your desk. Tell me what you see. Now I want you to move one of your hands about six inches to the right. Now what do you see? I want you to move your other hand six inches to the left. Now what do you see? I want you to move your arms completely away. Now, what do you see? That’s what happens with a TV camera or with anything else. When you do anything, you look through your lens. If you haven’t expanded that lens enough, you can’t tell everyone everything that’s happening at that moment. That doesn’t mean you’re lying, but it does mean someone with a different lens needs to [help complete the picture].”

**DO: How do you think the Trump administration’s agenda will impact public affairs reporting?**

**AA:** It’s a great question, because everyone’s afraid. When they’re looking for you, they can find you, whether you’re on the radio or TV or whether you [write an op-ed at Tufts](https://www.cnn.com/2025/05/09/us/rumeysa-ozturk-tufts-bail-release). Should we worry? Of course. Is that a reason not to spend even more time [speaking out]? Of course not. In a lot of ways, the fear is almost inspirational for me, because they’re afraid of me. They’re afraid of the podcaster, the voter, and the facts. Understand the power. We have power. They’re afraid of us.

The greatest gift I’ve ever been given is being allowed to use my voice. It’s a very important responsibility. I lost the elections forgovernor and Congress, but that didn’t mean I stopped caring about my state or country. Even though I don’t have “governor” or “congressperson” next to my name, I have the facts, a microphone, a podcast, a radio show, and my voice, and I didn’t need to be elected to get it.