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**MARKETPLACE**

**SHOW: Marketplace (6:30 PM ET) - SYND**

**August 18, 2003 Monday**

ANCHORS: DAVID BRANCACCIO

BODY:

Announcer: From the Frank Stanton Studios in Los Angeles, this is MARKETPLACE.

DAVID BRANCACCIO, anchor:

And the bill for the blackout goes to consumers.

Problems in the pipeline pump up gas prices.

Plus, when it comes to the media covering more democracy, careful what you wish for.

Dr. MARTIN KAPLAN (Associate Dean, Annenberg School of Communication, University of Southern California): They're not covering issues, and they're not covering anyone but Arnold.

BRANCACCIO: This is MARKETPLACE.

(Announcements)

BRANCACCIO: It's Monday, the 18th of August. I'm David Brancaccio.

HEADLINE: Dr. Martin Kaplan of the Annenberg School at USC discusses local media coverage of political campaigns

DAVID BRANCACCIO, anchor:

It is Blue Sky Monday, a chance to 'blue sky,' as it were, with some MARKETPLACE contributors with arcane talents. Media analyst Martin Kaplan, associate dean of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California, likes to go on and on about how local TV news doesn't spend enough time covering political campaigns. Now with the recall of Governor Gray Davis in California, there is a thunder of media coverage, but Dr. Kaplan is still unhappy.

Dr. MARTIN KAPLAN (Associate Dean, Annenberg School of Communication,

University of Southern California): My guess is that there's been more coverage of this gubernatorial race than either of the last two put together. I did study the '98 campaign and found that in the entire state of California, for the 11 weeks of the campaign, there was about 37 hours total coverage. I think you could have seen that already just on CNN alone.

BRANCACCIO: And you're always waving data that shows that local TV news also don't do a particularly good job covering these races. This time every time I turn around there's Arnold on there.

Dr. KAPLAN: Yes, they are, and so I'm whining, you're quite right. And this time it's because they're not covering issues, and they're not covering anyone but Arnold. We don't have anything in this country which amounts to a requirement that stations pay attention to more than one candidate. People think there's something called the Fairness Doctrine or equal access. There aren't. In 1987 the FCC abolished the requirement that local news pay comparable attention to the various candidates in a race, and when the Congress passed a law overturning that, President Reagan vetoed it. So we now have a situation in which the only requirement is that if someone shows a movie with, say, a candidate in it, that the other candidates have to have an equal opportunity to be on the air -- but not news, not interviews and not documentaries.

BRANCACCIO: But there's nearly 200 candidates for governor in California. How possibly could a news director try to apportion air time in any kind of fair way?

Dr. KAPLAN: Well, for starters, they might decide that they would only cover candidates who had something to say. So far we have very little of that in this race. Arnold Schwarzenegger's race has been characterized by ducking or backpedaling away from the endorsements of his supporters, which turn out to be political hand grenades. We do have, from some of the other candidates, the--the makings of the campaign, but the problem is they're not as cool, they're not as hip to cover. They're not movie stars. And so substance isn't going to get them past the threshold.

BRANCACCIO: Yet the latest polls show that it isn't Arnold Schwarzenegger who seems to be gathering the most support suddenly. Maybe that says something about the public's ability to see through these media images.

Dr. KAPLAN: Well, it could be that the public touched a hot stove and realized it could get burnt. Arnold Schwarzenegger's fame is of the supernova quality. Maybe some people have decided that there's something wrong with thinking that the rest of California is as Disneyland as Disneyland itself.

BRANCACCIO: So quantity we got. Your issue is, 'Give me some quality moving forward.'

Dr. KAPLAN: I'd like people who watch local news for their information more than any other source, to actually have some content to be able to decide. Right now it's a wonderful freak show, but that's no way to choose.

BRANCACCIO: Marty, thank you.

Martin Kaplan is also the director of the Norman Lear Center at USC.