

SUPPORTING NATIONAL & LOCAL PUBLIC MEDIA

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- **Resist any attempt to lessen or eliminate funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) in FY 2011, FY 2012, and FY 2013, and to fund CPB at \$451 million in FY 2014.**
- **Pass the Community Access Preservation Act (H.R. 3745) that eliminates the federal restriction on the use of local programming funds, ensures technical quality equal to that available to commercial providers, and mandates that all providers delivering video via wired services be subject to the Cable Act.**

Background – Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Public media—Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), National Public Radio (NPR), public, educational, and government (PEG) access TV, and community radio stations—have a long history of presenting local, regional, and national arts programming. That much of this programming is not available on commercial channels adds to the unique position public media plays in bringing both classics and contemporary works to the American public. All of these systems exist because of public funding or legislation.

Local public radio and television stations have relied on funds provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which is advance-funded by two years in order to protect station editorial independence and allow for long-term program planning. Public media outlets offer true alternative programming to their commercial counterparts. However, they are often under-resourced and staffed by volunteers. Currently, the United States provides the least support to public broadcasting in the industrialized world—\$1.35 per capita annually. The president has requested \$451 million for FY 2014 in his budget, although, as of publication time, the agency has been threatened with termination during consideration of the FY 2011 Continuing Resolution.

Talking Points - Corporation for Public Broadcasting

- CPB is a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967 to promote noncommercial public telecommunications. In the authorizing language, Congress acknowledged public broadcasting's role in transmitting arts and culture: "It is in the public interest to encourage the growth and development of public radio and television broadcasting, including the use of such media for instructional, educational, and cultural purposes."
- CPB does not produce or broadcast programs. It awards grants to public broadcasting stations; independent producers; and program development and production organizations such as NPR, PBS, American Public Media, the National Minority Consortia, and Public Radio International (PRI). Roughly 89 percent of CPB's annual appropriation goes directly to public radio and television stations.
- CPB is the largest single source of funding for public television and radio programming. And while the federal portion of the average public station's revenue is only approximately 10-15 percent, stations leverage this funding to attract critical investments from state and local governments, universities, businesses, and viewers and listeners of local stations. For every federal dollar invested through CPB, stations raise more than \$6 on their own. Moreover, small and rural stations—which are often the only source of broadcast arts programming in their communities—are much more heavily dependent on CPB funding. For example, numerous rural public radio stations rely on CPB funding for more than 30 percent of their annual budgets, and without it, many of them could disappear.
- The American public believes the federal investment in public broadcasting is a wise one. In a 2010 Roper Public Affairs Poll, 80 percent of respondents—across all age groups and ethnicity, income, and education levels measured—believe funding for PBS is money "well spent." Respondents also found PBS an "excellent" use of tax dollars, second only to military defense and ahead of public schools.
- Each month, more than 170 million Americans listen, watch, or interact with public media. Local public television and radio stations air arts programming that is not available on commercial radio and television. Notably, public radio has embraced numerous musical genres that have been abandoned by commercial stations, including classical, folk, jazz, blues, and independent music. Public radio and television stations also have longstanding partnerships with local performing arts societies, helping to extend the reach of artists in communities throughout the country.

Background - Community Access Preservation Act (H.R. 3745)

Historically, public, educational, and government (PEG) access stations have received support from cable broadcasters and city franchise fees paid to cities, though more recently funding has come from a mix of local and state franchise agreements. In some communities, these public media outlets are the sole source for local news and information, emergency preparedness, and academic training programs. They reach large segments of the population often overlooked by national conglomerates that in recent years have replaced local programs with programming created for a national audience. Supporting and sustaining these valuable noncommercial public media outlets becomes increasingly important in a world where many local media outlets are disappearing and being replaced with corporate-owned outlets that don't provide similar local coverage.

Talking Points - Community Access Preservation Act (H.R. 3745)

- In 2007, the FCC ruled, subject to some important exceptions, that this PEG support may only be used for facilities and equipment, and not for PEG operating expenses. As a result, some communities are closing PEG facilities because there are no funds to operate them. H.R. 3745 amends the Cable Act to ensure that PEG fees can be used for any PEG purpose.
- The bill reaffirms that operators must deliver PEG channels to subscribers without additional charges, and via channels whose quality, accessibility, functionality, and placement is equivalent to local commercial television stations. These channels are invaluable assets in their communities providing local legislative, educational, and cultural programs not covered on commercial television stations.
- Federal law envisioned that PEG requirements would be established on a community-by-community basis. Several states, while intending to preserve PEG, have adopted statewide video franchising standards without regard to local needs and interests. Such statewide standards are prompting widespread *elimination* of PEG. To ensure PEG is preserved, each cable operator must provide the channels and critical facilities it had been providing in the past. Operators must also make ongoing PEG support payments equal to the greater of the cash payment required under state law, or the value of the PEG support it historically provided.
- Entities that provide video services via wired facilities in the rights of way are intended to be subject to Cable Act rules, regardless of the transmission protocol used to deliver service, but some claim that the law is unclear, creating doubt as to where the rules apply. The Act is amended to ensure it is technologically neutral. Providers using wired facilities in the rights of way are treated similarly and are subject to similar PEG requirements.