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NPR  
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**Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies  
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations**

Fiscal Year 2011 – 2013 Appropriations for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

Thank you Chairman Obey and Congressman Tiahrt for this opportunity to support funding for public broadcasting. As NPR's President and CEO, I am testifying on behalf more than 850 public radio station partners, producers and distributors of public radio programming including American Public Media (APM), Public Radio International (PRI), the Public Radio Exchange (PRX), and many stations, both large and small that create and distribute content through the Public Radio Satellite System (PRSS).

The public radio system and the tens of millions of Americans who listen to public radio programming every week are grateful, Chairman Obey, for your decades of support for public broadcasting funding. We are also grateful for the additional \$25 million in funding provided by Congress last year to help stations offset the devastating financial impact of the country's economic crisis.

Public radio's service to America is a story of continuing success, increasing dedication to news, journalism, public affairs and cultural programming, and expanding deployment of technology to improve our reach and impact. The nearly 34 million people tuning weekly into public radio programming is more than the total combined circulation of *USA Today*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post*, and the next top 62 newspapers. We are serving the American public through our broadcast stations, through our websites and internet streaming and through applications for the iPhone, iPad, Droid, Blackberry and other mobile devices.

Consider the contributions made by these public radio stations whose local public service illustrates a system-wide commitment to community engagement:

- **Milwaukee Public Radio:** This station began broadcasting public service programming in 1964 on 89.7 FM. Since that time it has become Southeastern Wisconsin's premiere source for news, information and entertainment programming with more than 100,000 listeners tuning in each week and with more than 20,000 unique visitors per month to the station's web site. While most listeners still tune to the station's FM frequency, others are discovering WUWM on new digital media platforms. Broadcasting with HD digital sound quality, WUWM provides two channels of programming, both on-air at 89.7FM and on-line at [www.wuwm.com](http://www.wuwm.com). 89.7 FM / HD1: IN-DEPTH NEWS broadcasts locally-produced in-depth news, quality entertainment, and cutting-edge music, as well as the best national offerings from NPR, Public Radio International and American Public Media. WUWM2/HD2: THE DEUCE, is a unique 24/7 music-intensive format that can be heard on HD Radio or streamed on-line. Podcasts of local programs are also available. *Lake Effect* is the station's daily magazine, which includes interviews, reports and documentaries on issues and culture in southeastern Wisconsin. WUWM also produces several music programs that bring progressive music to the air such as *Café Tonight*, *Saturday at the Café*, and *It's Alright, Ma, It's Only Music*. WUWM is listener-supported, licensed to the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents and has 30 full time staff including 11 journalists.

- **WXPR:** A community-licensed public radio station with studios in Rhinelander, WXPR serves about a 70-mile diameter area of Wisconsin. On the air since 1983, WXPR would never have been built, nor continued to serve the local community today without the continuing effort and generosity of many people in the Northwoods, plus Community Service Grants from the federal appropriation provided to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. WXPR is proud to provide the only radio service to large, sparsely populated rural areas of the state and is planning to expand coverage with two small repeater stations in Ironwood and Iron Mountain, Michigan.
- **Southern California Public Radio:** Southern California Public Radio is a member-supported public radio network that operates 89.3 KPCC-FM in Los Angeles and Orange County, 89.1 KUOR-FM in the Inland Empire and 90.3 KPCV in the Coachella Valley. Reaching more than 600,000 listeners every week, SCPR is the most listened to public radio news service of any kind in Southern California. With about 30 reporters, and bureaus in L.A., Orange County, the Inland Empire and Washington, D.C., the station offers a wide array of rich local programming, including: *L.A. Theatre Works*, *The Loh Down on Science* and *Town Hall Journal*, all designed to serve the unique local needs of its community.
- **Minnesota Public Radio:** MPR operates a regional network of 38 stations, covering Minnesota and parts of Wisconsin, the Dakotas, Michigan, Iowa and Idaho. With 850,000 listeners each week, MPR has the largest audience of any regional public radio network and an expanding news department of 76 that is committed to improving local and regional coverage. MPR is a leader in classical and current music, and in a growing online news service, NewsQ.

Stations like these, operating in every state and congressional district in the country, have become living embodiments of journalistic excellence, providing news, information and cultural programming as other sources of media are contracting or retreating from local coverage. Many are the only locally owned and operated news organization in their community.

### **Public Funds for Public Media:**

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) is an indispensable public funding source for public radio, accounting for roughly 12% of an average public radio station's annual budget. The public broadcasting community is urging Congress to appropriate \$604 million in two-year advanced funding for FY 2013.

Journalism, news, information and cultural programming are the cornerstones of public radio. And we are expanding in these areas, as many commercial news organizations contract. For example, public broadcasting stations have launched **Local Journalism Centers (LJCs)**, combining funds from CPB and resources of 27 station entities to expand and improve journalism on the regional level. A primary goal of this initiative is to replace some of the traditional newsgathering capacity that has been lost amid the recent cutbacks, to take full advantage of developing technology in order to nourish and support the creation of new journalistic endeavors, and to ensure that there are no barriers to the distribution of public media content.

A second recent joint initiative – Project Argo – is aimed at bringing expanding information on topics critical to communities and the nation. This project, supported by CPB and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, provides a pilot group of 12 NPR stations with the resources to expand original reporting, and to curate, distribute and share online content about high-interest, specialized subjects. The two-year pilot will help a dozen stations establish themselves as definitive sources of news on a topic selected by each one as most relevant to its community, such as city politics, the changing economy,

healthcare, immigration and education. These online reports will help fill the growing gap in local news offerings.

Importantly, music is an integral element of public radio's community service and the future of public media. Classical, jazz, folk, AAA, world and eclectic are music formats offered by public radio stations in cities large and small. Communities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Miami, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, McAllen Texas, Rochester New York, Grand Rapids Michigan, Tulsa Oklahoma, Knoxville Tennessee and the entire states of Wyoming, Minnesota and Vermont, among others, depend on public radio stations as the only source of classical music. For jazz enthusiasts, public radio stations in cities like Newark, Ypsilanti, Laramie, Baton Rouge, Phoenix, Los Angeles, Denver, Orlando, San Mateo, Montgomery, Worcester, Atlanta and Las Vegas are gateways to the masters of this uniquely American musical dialect. More than 100 stations have full-time music formats.

## **DIGITAL FUNDING:**

### **Broadcasting's Digital Transition**

Broadcasting remains the principle distribution path for public radio programs. By the end of 2009, 463 stations were on the air with digital signals and more than 180 were multicasting (sending out two or more program streams) to their communities and listeners. Recent action by the Federal Communications Commission permitting public radio stations to boost HD signal power and provide expanded signal coverage creates another compelling reason to continue conversion funding. Many public radio stations will be seeking to boost power to better serve their communities in the coming year. Public broadcasting's funding request to continue our digital transformation in FY 2011 is \$59.5 million.

Public Radio is using digital broadcasting as a tool to improve and broaden the reach of our programming to poorly served and un-served audiences. Radio reading services for the blind and deaf are becoming more accessible. Stations' service to communities during times of local and regional emergencies will benefit from digital broadcasting's more flexible and adaptable features. Digital broadcasting technology has enabled public radio stations to:

- **Provide increased local services to communities:** Stations are doubling and tripling programming offerings by multicasting through HD radio channels 2 and 3 options while superserving existing and new groups of listeners.
- **Increase the diversity of programming by providing additional content for current audience:** Use of HD radio channels 2 and 3 means more news programming options, music and entertainment for listeners. The additional HD radio channels allow stations to add public affairs programming, educational instruction, international news, specialty music streams (jazz, classical, bluegrass, folk, rock, pop, international, etc.), and non-English language news.
- **Bring the content rich world of public radio to blind and deaf audiences:** Relying often on small armies of volunteers, over 120 stations provide 24-hour life-line service consisting of news education and readings from daily newspapers and magazine articles. Text information services such as emergency warnings and public service alerts may also be incorporated into the signal to enable display of this data.

### **The New Network: Internet, Web and Mobile Platforms**

The 1967 Public Broadcasting Act gave enduring reality to two important concepts: public funds for public broadcasting and the creation of a national, independent, not-for-profit network of television and radio broadcasters to serve the American public. More than four decades later, as public

broadcasting's embrace of new technologies to serve and engage a wider and more diverse audience quickens its transformation into Public Media, a new network for the digital era must be fostered. This new network, built upon a **Public Media Platform** and utilizing the success and assets of public broadcasting as its core, will enable the next generation of content creation and distribution so that the American public can benefit from a larger vision of service from Public Media.

Public radio is embracing the networked environment as a primary platform for audience and community service. To ensure that the American public continues to have free and universal access to public media content, high-speed and affordable broadband access is simply a necessity. Congressionally-appropriated digital transition funds are essential to help ensure our success in providing a larger, more diverse and more inclusive service to the American public.

Among the many station and national network initiatives underway, these are worth highlighting:

- **NPR's API:** In July 2008, NPR released an open Application Programming Interface, (API), a new pathway for content and functions to be widely shared on the web. NPR was one of the first major national media organizations to launch an API and it is an integral component of our mission to create a more informed public. It allows public radio stations and individual users to play a direct role in broadening web access to public radio content. The principle of openness encompassed in this web tool is a fundamental extension of the standards of free and universal access that are common to more traditional distribution of public radio content. Utilization of the API by stations enables the creation of content that more closely matches local community needs and interests, and facilitates diverse, more creative presentations of content, again to connect local information needs with content generated by other, collaborating communities.
- **The Public Media Platform:** Realizing public media's full potential requires a strategic investment in an information architecture that brings together fragmented digital assets. The *Public Media Platform*, under development by NPR in partnership with CPB, APM, PRI, PBS and the Public Radio Exchange (PRX), will allow content from a wide variety of independent and institutional producers to be combined in a common back-end system; and then for that content to be extracted and displayed on a wide variety of digital platforms based on business rules set by the producers. It is in essence and in practice the digital equivalent of the satellite distribution network that serves public radio's broadcast audience with the powers of search, social media tools, analytics and data.

Thank you again for continuing to support funding for public service media.