



Patricia de Stacy Harrison
President and
Chief Executive Officer

May 9, 2024

The Honorable Ted Cruz
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Cruz:

Thank you for your letter of April 25, 2024, and for the opportunity to respond to your questions and opinions regarding NPR, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's ("CPB") commitment to the programming it funds for distribution through local public radio stations reflecting the standards of journalistic integrity as set forth in the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 ("Act").¹

Below are my responses to your questions:

1. Is it important that public broadcasters endeavor to serve the broadest possible swath of the American public?

Yes.

2. Does the CPB believe it is important to disseminate news and reporting free from partisanship or political bias?

Yes.

3. How does CPB justify continued funding for NPR when documented evidence shows a deep-seated culture of partisanship that contradicts the requirement for balanced and fair reporting?

The Public Broadcasting Act requires CPB to "facilitate the full development of public telecommunications in which programs of high quality, diversity, creativity, excellence, and innovation, which are obtained from diverse sources...with strict adherence to objectivity and balance in all programs or series of programs of a controversial nature."² The Act also requires CPB to afford public broadcasters "maximum protection from extraneous interference and control"³ and to assure "maximum freedom from interference with, or control of, program content or other activities."⁴

¹ 47 U.S.C. § 396(a)(6).

² 47 U.S.C. § 396(g)(1)(A).

³ 47 U.S.C. § 396(a)(10).

⁴ 47 U.S.C. § 396(a)(6).

Public radio stations provide an invaluable service to our nation. Millions of Americans depend on their local public radio station for fact-based journalism about their world, country, and community. This is especially true for those who live in rural and remote areas, where the stations often serve as the primary, if not sole, source of news.

Approximately 250 public radio licensees, operating more than 1,080 stations, choose to be NPR member stations. This represents about two-thirds of the public radio system. CPB support makes it possible for all public radio stations to provide fact-based news and vital information that accurately informs their communities.

The majority of CPB’s direct funding of NPR,⁵ as required by law, is predominantly paid from federal appropriations for interconnection facilities and operations, and not for programming. Under the Communications Act, all Community Service Grant (“CSG”) funds provided to the stations “may be used at the discretion of the recipient for purposes related primarily to the production or acquisition of programming.”⁶ Along with the CSGs, CPB distributes 23 percent of the funds designated for public radio directly to public radio stations “solely to be used for acquiring or producing programming that is to be distributed nationally and is designed to serve the needs of a national audience.”⁷

Further, the Act directs CPB to grant seven percent of the funds designated for public radio to produce other programming. During the last ten years, CPB has used these funds to support a range of content, including StoryCorps, the development of music programming, regional journalism initiatives, and the work of NPR’s 16 international news bureaus.

4. When did the CPB learn about the ratio between registered Republicans and registered Democrats serving as editors for NPR?

On April 9, 2024, CPB read about Mr. Berliner’s 2021 efforts to ascertain the voter registration of NPR’s editors.

5. Please detail what steps, if any, the CPB has taken to audit NPR’s adherence to the standards expected of a recipient of federal funding, especially in light of recent exposures.

CPB annually audits compliance with Communications Act funding requirements by recipients of Community Service Grants and other CPB grants. Under the Communications Act of 1934⁸ and the Public Telecommunications Act of 1992,⁹ the objectivity and balance mandate is a CPB responsibility.¹⁰ CPB requires compliance with

⁵ 69% of that funding on average for the last 10 years. See response at question #10 below for more details.

⁶ 47 U.S.C. §396(k)(7)

⁷ 47 U.S.C. § 396(k)(3)(A)(iii)(III)

⁸ 47 U.S.C. §396(g)(1)(a)

⁹ [Pub. L. 102-356, § 19](#), Aug. 26, 1992, [106 Stat. 955](#).

¹⁰ Id. at 47 U.S.C. §396 note.

the objectivity and balance mandate in the few content grant agreements it enters into with NPR.¹¹ The review process begins after the work we fund has been completed.

CPB will continue to comply with the mandates of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967 and the Public Telecommunications Act of 1992,¹² by supporting an independent periodic review of the objectivity and balance mandate in concert with our statutory obligation to maintain a firewall of editorial independence.¹³ In addition, we will continue to fund the Editorial Integrity and Leadership Initiative which affirms the highest standards of editorial integrity, through training for local public media newsroom executives and content producers. We will continue to review public media's national programs that CPB has directly funded for their accuracy, fairness, objectivity, and balance; and maintain our "Open to the Public" platform which invites everyone to comment on public broadcasting programs. CPB includes those comments, and CPB's responses, in an annual report to the White House which transmits it to Congress.

CPB will consult with public media's national organizations and local stations to ensure public media continues to be trusted by the American people.

a. If the CPB has taken no steps, why has it not?

See response to question #5 above.

6. If the CPB claims to lack sufficient authority to audit the organizations it funds, what steps will it take to increase its auditing capacities?

CPB does not claim to lack sufficient authority to audit the organizations it funds for compliance with their grant agreements.

7. How will the CPB hold NPR accountable for its demonstrated political bias?

Congress required CPB in the 1967 Public Broadcasting Act to afford public broadcasters maximum protection from extraneous interference and control.¹⁴ In 2005, CPB was criticized by its Inspector General and by Congress for auditing public television and radio content for political bias.¹⁵ Since then, CPB has diligently complied with this prohibition.

¹¹ NPR is an independent, nonprofit media and membership organization. The NPR Ethics Handbook states "at NPR, the journalists – including senior news managers – have full and final authority over all journalistic decisions." <https://www.npr.org/series/688409791/npr-ethics-handbook/archive?refresh=true>.

¹² Pub. L. 102-356, § 19, Aug. 26, 1992, 106 Stat. 955.

¹³ 47 U.S.C. § 396(a)(10). See response to question #3 above.

¹⁴ Id.

¹⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/11/15/tomlinson.cpb/index.html>

8. Please detail the specific measures the CPB will implement to incentivize NPR to return to independent journalism.

See response to question #5 above.

9. In light of the significant shift in NPR’s audience demographic towards a more liberal base, what precise actions will CPB take to help ensure that NPR serves as much of the American public as possible, including non-liberals?

Id.

10. How much funding per year did CPB provide directly to NPR each year during the last 10 years?

Fiscal Year	General Appropriations	Interconnection Appropriations	Total
2015	\$ 1,496,018	\$ 116,931	\$ 1,612,949
2016	1,947,516	8,327	1,955,843
2017	1,879,720	1,508	1,881,228
2018	1,182,881	25,845,852	27,028,733
2019	1,673,426	-	1,673,426
2020	2,492,412	-	2,492,412
2021	978,868	6,965,000	7,943,868
2022	2,923,241	2,621,313	5,544,554
2023	2,570,701	11,752,360	14,323,060
2024*	4,900,000	2,200,000	7,100,000
Total	\$ 22,044,783	\$ 49,511,291	\$ 71,556,073

*FY 2024 through April 30, 2024

a. What percent of NPR’s total annual budget does this constitute?

CPB does not know what percent of NPR’s annual budget CPB’s direct funding represents.

11. How much funding per year did CPB provide to local stations during the last 10 years?

Fiscal Year	Radio		Total
	Radio CSGs	Programming	
2015	\$ 93,831,922	\$ 6,936,544	\$ 100,768,466
2016	92,638,419	9,376,938	102,015,357
2017	94,174,609	5,640,734	99,815,343
2018	92,037,139	7,553,970	99,591,109
2019	93,464,464	7,280,606	100,745,070
2020	93,580,807	9,221,001	102,801,808
2021	93,881,493	7,913,744	101,795,237
2022	97,025,642	7,145,925	104,171,567
2023	99,030,845	6,726,165	105,757,010
2024*	95,908,538	6,411,970	102,320,508
Total	\$ 945,573,878	\$ 74,207,597	\$ 1,019,781,475

*FY 2024 through April 30, 2024

a. How much of that funding, in total, did local stations then direct to CPB?

None. Local stations do not direct funding to CPB, except to pay penalties resulting from their failure to comply with provisions of the Communications Act of 1934, 47 U.S.C. §396, et seq.,¹⁶ and/or CPB’s CSG General Provisions and Eligibility Requirements. If, however, your subpart a. intended to ask what portion of those grants the stations paid to NPR rather than to CPB, CPB does not track those expenditures of CSG funds.

b. What percent of NPR’s total annual budget does the figure provided in response to (a) constitute?

CPB does not know what percent of NPR’s annual budget CPB’s indirect funding represents.

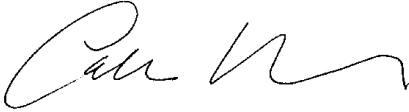
12. Please provide a copy of all of Maher’s emails, both sent and received, during her employment at NPR.

CPB does not have access to Ms. Maher’s email messages, either sent or received during her employment at NPR, except for the few that were sent to and from CPB. Without waiving any rights, copies of those are enclosed.

¹⁶ For example: Open Meetings, including meetings of the recipient’s board, community advisory board, and their committees, documenting the reasons for closing those meetings, and making that documentation available to the public (47 U.S.C. § 396(k)(4)); Open Financial Records (47 U.S.C. § 396(k)(5)); Community Advisory Board (47 U.S.C. § 396(k)(8)); Employment Statistical Report (47 U.S.C. § 396(k)(11)); and Donor Information (47 U.S.C. § 396(k)(12)). Failure to comply with the Communications Act requirements will subject the recipient to a penalty of \$5,000 per infraction.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at PHarrison@cpb.org or Anne Brachman, CPB's Senior Vice President of External Affairs, at Abachman@cpb.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia de Stacy Harrison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping tail.

Patricia de Stacy Harrison