

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

Anti-American Airwaves: Holding the heads of NPR and PBS Accountable

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My name is Mike Gonzalez. I am the Angeles T. Arredondo *E Pluribus Unum* Senior Fellow at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

Before joining The Heritage Foundation 16 years ago, and working for the Administration of George W. Bush, I was a journalist for many years. I worked in Latin America, Asia, and Europe for a decade and a half, traveled with the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, was arrested in Panama, covered the Stock Market in New York for The Wall Street Journal, the creation of the euro currency, and China's takeover of Hong Kong. I am perhaps most proud of having covered high school sports for The Boston Herald. I have worked for daily newspapers and wire agencies, not having a face for broadcast.

As a former journalist, I therefore welcome this timely hearing on the political bias at NPR and PBS, and the other lesser-known inhabitants of the public broadcasting ecosystem. Before becoming an opinion writer at The Wall Street Journal, I was a reporter. I can tell you from experience that journalists can keep their political biases in check, give all sides a hearing, and remain impartial.

This capacity for controlling your biases becomes an even more serious obligation when taxpayers of all persuasions are coerced to pay for you. It is not just a matter of simple human decency toward the people who defray your costs and supply you with a living, it is also a matter of simple survival. It should be obvious that a people paying for your livelihood will very soon grow tired of your disdain if that is all you show them, and will in time try to close their purse to you.

NPR, PBS and the other state broadcasters have, however, simply refused to abide by this simple code. They have been coddled by allies in Congress into feeling immune to it. They have shown scorn for conservative views on a consistent basis, and have done so safe in the knowledge that their friends in Congress, of both parties, will save their bacon year in and year out. And indeed, this has so far always been the case since they were created.

But as this opportune hearing today shows, the nation is now in a different place. We are \$36 trillion in debt, and, perhaps more importantly, we are seeing culturally and politically not just a shift in our cultural vibe, but a shift in societal paradigms. The American electorate, speaking through their elected representatives, no longer accept a Washington, DC-based leftist infrastructure created to sustain the permanent ascendancy of a managerial caste. The institutions of this infrastructure are tottering before our very eyes. USAID, VOA, and other mainstays of the progressive ecology are now gone.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, or CPB, should be next in joining other members of the New Deal's and Great Society's alphabet soup of agencies on the ash-heap of history. This LBJ-era institution was created to act as a vehicle for the collection of moneys appropriated by Congress, and to then distribute those funds to NPR, PBS, and more than 1,500 local television and radio stations nationwide. The CPB is now asking for \$595 million advance appropriation for the latest fiscal year.¹ Congress appropriates money for it two years in advance.

As this hearing should be able to easily show, through their egregious bias, NPR and PBS have violated the public trust, and have therefore forsaken their claim on the public money. As the ancient Chinese used to say of successive dynasties that eventually exhausted the long-suffering public's patience, and were inevitably toppled, public broadcasting has through its uninhibited bias lost the Mandate of Heaven. It should be defunded and the CPB should be dissolved.

There are multiple arguments to be made for ceasing to supply NPR, PBS and the other broadcasters with the taxpayer's money. I have

already mentioned that we are deeply in debt, and cannot afford to indulge luxuries just because we have always done so. The arrangement is also unfair to private sector media competitors—Why should PBS and NPR receive a taxpayer subsidy when MSNBC and Salem Radio are forced to compete without it? The service, additionally, is no longer necessary, if it ever was. It was created as part of LBJ's Great Society with the promise that it would be educational in nature, and would abstain from controversial public affairs. Even the liberal godfather of public broadcasting, the Ford Foundation's Fred Friendly, understood that having politicians appropriate moneys for programming dealing with government and politics was a recipe for disaster, testifying to Congress in 1967 that “we must avoid at all costs any situation in which budgets of news and public-affairs programming would be appropriated or even approved by any branch of the Federal government.”²

But in the present age, when thousands of competitors have come online, not to mention four million podcasts, and with the educational programming component of PBS much diminished when not eliminated, public broadcasting has become, as George Will says, “like the human appendix: vestigial, purposeless, and susceptible to unhealthy episodes.” There is also the fact that this funding is a regressive tax. It is an obnoxious forced wealth transfer from working families to the most affluent pockets of society, which constitute the lion's share of NPR's and PBS's audience.

These are all open and shut cases, and if it weren't for the public broadcasters' canny lobbying, what we might call “The Sesame Street Effect”—because how could you oppose Sesame Street?—we would not be here today. But the ultimate decisive factor, the killer argument as it were, rests on the broadcasters' unforgivable political bias, regardless of the popularity that Elmo or Big Bird may have one day enjoyed. Thomas Jefferson, who never heard an electronic broadcast in his life, summed up why continued taxpayer funding for public broadcasting is immoral when he said, “To compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagations of opinions which he disbelieves and abhors, is

¹ Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Federal Appropriation Request and Justification. <https://cpb.org/funding>

² The Public television act of 1967. Hearings, Ninetieth Congress, first session, on S. 1160. pg. 73.

sinful and tyrannical.”³ What we have today is a circular relationship that is inimical to democracy: Democrats unanimously vote for more and more money for public broadcasters every year, and in exchange, public broadcasting heavily tips the scales in their favor. It is a nice arrangement for them, but it has to end.

NPR’s and PBS’s naked and full-hearted embrace of very progressive views, including on Sesame Street when they owned it, and constant denigration of conservative ones, is so palpable that it can be quantified, and has indeed been quantified. To be clear, we shouldn’t have to. All a fair-minded person need do is spend ten minutes listening to any NPR show or watching the PBS News Hour. We shouldn’t need to explain why water’s wet. But we can.

Let’s first look at the testimony offered by one of NPR’s own insiders—longtime editor Uri Berliner—less than a year ago. This veteran of a quarter century at NPR wrote for the Free Press an essay that was as damning a portrayal of the service he had once loved as any ever written, describing it as a place that now just offers “the distilled worldview of a very small segment of the U.S. population.” “An open-minded spirit no longer exists within NPR,” added Berliner, “and now, predictably, we don’t have an audience that reflects America.”⁴

Now, before I go on about Mr. Berliner’s testimony, I will hasten to warn that NPR will respond by tarnishing this witness. Rather than pause for reflection, heed his warnings, and attempt to reform, after this whistleblower went public, NPR instead chose to deny, deny, deny, and assassinate his character, to the point that he eventually resigned. This is actually additional evidence of the intellectual defensive crouch that these broadcasters now themselves in. Circling the wagons has become part of a pattern. In 2010, NPR fired Juan Williams, another veteran of many years, and publicly vilified him as a psycho, after he dared deviate from the network’s clerical progressive orthodoxy. The people running NPR appear to have become a

cloistered group of ideologues who arrogantly refuse to restructure and instead issue never-ending demands for more money.

But what exactly did Mr. Berliner get wrong? Do the news editors at the broadcasters have numbers that disprove his allegations? No, they don’t. They remain, as Mr. Williams describe them, “an insulated cadre of people who think they’re right, and they have a hard time with people who are different.”

As Mr. Berliner told it, the broadcaster, always liberal from its creation in the 1970s, irreparably went off the rails when Donald Trump was first elected president in 2016. “His election,” Berliner wrote, “was greeted at NPR with a mixture of disbelief, anger, and despair.” Tough, “straightforward coverage” of Mr. Trump “veered toward efforts to damage or topple Trump’s presidency.”

NPR first hitched its wagon to the claim that Russia had colluded with the Trump campaign. If the American people had bought that, Mr. Trump would indeed have been toppled. The broadcaster interviewed the top Democrat making this claim, Adam Schiff, then the top Democrat in the House’s Intelligence Committee, no fewer than 26 times to make the case, by Mr. Berliner’s count. Mr. Schiff used this platform to spread what we now know was a lie, that he had evidence of this collusion. But when special Prosecutor Robert Mueller, in his breathlessly anticipated 2019 report, found no evidence of such collusion, NPR refused to admit its grave error. What we got instead was literally radio silence.

Not only did NPR remain unchastened by this error, but it kept digging a deeper hole with other stories. When the Hunter Biden laptop story emerged in 2019, NPR refused to cover it. We now know that enough voter would have changed their minds had they known of the truth about the laptop. NPR’s managing editor responded by saying, “We don’t want to waste our time on stories that are not really stories, and we don’t want to waste the listeners’ and readers’ time on stories that are just pure distractions.”⁵ Mr. Berliner said he heard others

³ Joyce Appleby and Terence Ball, eds., *Jefferson: Political Writings*, (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pg. 390.

⁴ Uri Berliner, “I Have Been at NPR for 25 Years. Here’s How We Lost America’s Trust.” *The Free Press*, April 9,

2024. <https://www.thefp.com/p/npr-editor-how-npr-lost-americas-trust>

⁵ Tim Graham, “Column: NPR Defines Hunter Biden News as a Waste of Time.” *Newsbusters*, Media Research Center, October 22, 2020.

<https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/tim->

expressed the view that reporting on the story would help get Mr. Trump re-elected, so it was best to sweep it under the rug.

Ditto with COVID-19. NPR firmly aligned with the progressive view that the virus had a natural origin, not that it had leaked from the Wuhan Lab—a view it trashed as racist and xenophobic. This naturally helped prevent public discussion of an issue with national health implications. Once again, that the virus emerged from the Wuhan Lab is now a legitimate explanation for how the virus emerged, if not an accepted fact.⁶

Finally, after the death of George Floyd and the ensuing riots led and organized by Black Lives Matter in 2020, NPR firmly took the side of those small but influential segments of society that affirmed, without a shred of evidence, that America is an oppressive society gripped by systemic racism. I have already told you of my experiences reporting from overseas, and I can add that I have lived at least a year in seven countries, visiting many others. This month alone, I have visited Peru, Mexico City, Paraguay, and Panama. Next month I will address a group in Valencia, Spain, and the month after that I plan to visit Paris, Budapest and Warsaw. I can compare and contrast, in other words. I can affirm to you now that, no, we are by no means an oppressive society and that, while of course ugly racists do exist, as they do in any countries, America is not systematically racist. These are vile lies told to further a political agenda.

If NPR, or PBS, for that matter, were true public services, they could have acted to save the country from much of the damaging, self-inflicted hysteria that followed. As Mr. Berliner observed, “We happen to have a very powerful tool for answering such questions: journalism. Journalism that lets evidence lead the way. But the message from the top (at NPR) was very different. America’s infestation with systemic racism was declared loud and clear: it was a given. Our mission was to change it.”

[graham/2020/10/22/column-npr-defines-hunter-biden-news-waste-time](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd9qjjj4zy5o)

⁶ Holly Honderich, CIA Says Lab Leak Most Likely Source of COVID Outbreak, January 25, 2025, BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cd9qjjj4zy5o>

⁷ Transcript of PBS Newshour, September 17, 2020. “What Trump Is Saying About 1619 Project, Teaching U.S. History,” [What Trump is saying about 1619 Project, teaching U.S. history | PBS News](https://www.pbs.org/newshour/what-trump-is-saying-about-1619-project-teaching-u.s.-history)

PBS, incidentally, also took the sides of the protests and embraced the riots and BLM. Yamiche Alcindor, the liberal activist that PBS hired to be its White House correspondent covering Trump’s first term, routinely used the platform that the taxpayer had granted her to make unsubstantiated allegations against the president as she affirmed his enemies’ views. In one representative interaction with Judy Woodruff in September, 2020, Alcindor defended the New York Times’s 1619 Project, a mendacious revisionist fantasy, as “a robust telling of all of the different ways that slavery continues to touch our daily lives.” She celebrated that “the 1619 Project is going into American schools,” and affirmed that the debunked exercise was “based on facts, Judy, not on any sort of exploitation or falsehoods.” As for BLM, Alcindor tried to pass herself off as an objective journalist by saying that “as someone who’s covered those protests,” she could tell us that the protesters were “taking to the streets because they want to see America treat African Americans and people of color more fairly.”⁷ BLM, of course, has been shown to be a group of at best grifters who used millions in donations to purchase mansions, and at worst Marxists who set out to dismantle society. The so-called BLM Plaza no longer exists outside these walls in our nation’s capital.

And what did Alcindor say about President Biden? At his very first press conference, she complimented him for being elected “as a moral, decent man.” These traits she ascribed to Biden even exonerated him from the immigration debacle he then unleashed. It was, according to the fawning Alcindor, “the reason why a lot of immigrants are coming to this country and are trusting you with unaccompanied minors.”⁸ Alcindor’s replacement covering the White House, Laura Barron-Lopez, has been an even more biased activist posing as a journalist.⁹ Nor is this astonishing degree of bias relegated to public affairs at PBS. Even its travel contributor, Rick Steves, has dropped his jovial

⁸ The American Presidency Project, The President’s News Conference, March 25, 2025. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/the-presidents-news-conference-1268>

⁹ MRC Newsbusters, Laura Barron-Lopez. <https://newsbusters.org/journalists/laura-barron-lopez>

demeanor and is currently comparing President Trump to Hitler.¹⁰

In the case of NPR, it did not just abet the mass hysteria and fanned its flames, but as Mr. Berliner tells it, it chose to run stories that were “alarmingly divisive,” even “justifying looting.”

This is, Madam Chairwoman and members of this committee, as chilling an indictment as you are likely to hear of any of our public institutions. One that should lead us to ask why President Trump, Elon Musk and his DOGE team did not start first with the CPB, which funds a domestic threat, rather than with USAID, which mostly financed our foreign enemies. NPR, according to veteran of a quarter century, actively worked to topple an elected, sitting President; obfuscated on matters of public health; and fanned the flames of extremism, encouraging violent acts. NPR’s bias, therefore, is not just an annoying attitudinal stance that we can just look away from: it represents a danger to our physical health as well as to the civic health of our body politics.

Again, NPR will most assuredly respond by once again vilifying a man who came from within its own ranks. I can hear Steve Inskeep already running faux factchecks on what I am saying. But it’s not just Mr. Berliner. Tim Graham of the Media Research Service, a jewel of an institution that acts as a watchdog on what should be society’s watchdog, our national media, has dedicated a lifetime documenting this taxpayer-subsidized bias.

And Graham is a never-ending source of examples. He points out, for instance, how on the NPR Politics Podcast on July 17, 2021, reporter Danielle Kurtzleben promoted Yale professor Elizabeth Hinton’s new book on the acceptability of violence as a protest tactic. Kurtzleben explained: “You talk about these clashes

as rebellions—and quite pointedly, not as riots. It’s a very meaningful choice,” gushed Kurtzleben. “It really kind of shapes how the reader perceives these clashes.” The verdict? “This book was excellent” exclaimed Kurtzleben, who is now a White House reporter.¹¹

On August 27, 2020, Graham points out, NPR’s blog “Code Switch,” ran an interview promoting a new book titled—what else?—In Defense of Looting. Reporter Natalie Escobar promoted author Emily Osterweil’s view that “looting is a powerful tool to bring about real, lasting change in society. The rioters who smash windows and take items from stores, she says, are engaging in a powerful tactic that questions the justice of ‘law and order,’ and the distribution of property and wealth in an unequal society.”¹²

Got that? American taxpayers are coerced into promoting the view that what little the taxman allows them to keep can be stolen by armed, violent individuals. Is that something that you are prepared to fund in perpetuity?

To give but one more example, Graham documents how on NPR’s Fresh Air on April 15, 2023, NPR movie critic John Powers heaped praise on the movie How to Blow Up a Pipeline. It was “hugely timely,” he enthused, at a time when “people are frustrated by society’s inability, indeed unwillingness to even slow down ecological disasters like climate change.” The movie was, Powers said, “the most compelling argument I’ve read for eco-sabotage.” These violent radicals were just “ordinary people whose reasons we can sympathize with,” proclaimed Powers.¹³

Mr. Graham’s reporting clinically authenticates all the allegations that Mr. Berliner made. And it’s not just NPR. PBS has masterfully managed to be almost as biased as NPR, while hiding behind a

¹⁰ Rick Steves, Hitler’s First Victims Were His Political Opponents. <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1363863331256571>

¹¹ Tim Graham, “NPR Book Club Promotes Author Who Wants Race Riots and Looting Defined as ‘Rebellions’.” Newsbusters, Media Research Center, July 24, 2021. <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/tim-graham/2021/07/24/npr-book-club-promotes-author-who-wants-race-riots-and-looting>

¹² Tim Graham, “Welcome to Crazy Town: NPR Promotes Book ‘In Defense of Looting’.” Newsbusters,

Media Research Center, August 29, 2020.

<https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/tim-graham/2020/08/29/welcome-crazy-town-npr-promotes-book-defense-looting>

¹³ Clay Waters, “NPR Bias Hits Movies: Loves Eco-Terror, Hates Capitalism, ‘Transphobic’ Rowling.” Newsbusters, Media Research Center, April 15, 2023. <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/clay-waters/2023/04/15/npr-bias-hits-movies-loves-eco-terror-hates-capitalism-transphobic>

sheen of respectability and upper-crust elite tastes. Somehow, we associate it more with Masterpiece Theater, which runs exports from Britain, rather than with the homemade radicalism of Frontlines.

But Mr. Graham lifts the veil. He finds, for example, that the “PBS News Hour” routinely books many more liberals than conservatives. Over a four-month period from November 2022 to February 2023, MRC found that liberal-Democratic guests outnumbered conservative-Republican guests 3.7 to 1. When elected officials and political appointees were removed from the guest count, the disparity was even more striking, becoming 5.7-to-1.¹⁴

Mr. Graham’s MRC analysts examined weeknight editions of the “NewsHour” from January 3 through May 2, 2023, and found that, by a five-to-one margin, NewsHour promoted controversies involving congressional Republicans over those involving Democrats. Congressional Republicans faced 85% negative coverage, compared to 54% positive coverage of congressional Democrats, the analysis showed. NewsHour correspondents branded Republicans as extremists (“far right,” “hard right,” etc.) 20 times during this period. How many times were left-wing Democrats so identified? None.¹⁵ Lastly, NewsHour promoted controversies involving congressional Republicans over those involving Democrats by a five-to-one margin. Coverage of the 2024 party conventions was also lopsidedly biased. An MRC analysis found that PBS treated the Republican convention to 72% negative

and 28% positive commentary. The Democrat convention played with a homefield advantage, on the other hand: it received 12% negative coverage, versus 88% positive commentary.¹⁶

Routinely, NPR and PBS support the environmentalism and the trans agenda, two other hot button issues of the Left. Only a very small number of minors take puberty blockers, and those who do experience a high level of satisfaction, their reports regularly tell us.¹⁷ Detransitioning happens, a PBS report tells us, “for external reasons. Some lose their jobs or health insurance and can’t afford to continue treatment. Others find it too difficult to deal with discrimination in their daily lives.” On Oct. 1, 2024, with the presidential election in the balance, NPR ran a puff piece on Minnesota Gov. and Democratic Vice Presidential candidate Tim Walz transexual law, which falsely accused his opponent JD Vance of laying when he rightly said the law made it possible for parents to lose custody if they opposed the so-called transition of their child.¹⁸

The same with the radical environmentalist cause, which PBS, NPR and the rest of public media fully embrace. At American Public Media, another public media outfit, the climate stories on its Marketplace programs are reported by a unit called the “sustainability desk.” It was created with a grant by the hyper-progressive Tides Foundation.¹⁹

As we assess all this, is it any wonder that NPR and PBS have lost basically all their conservative audience? According to Mr. Berliner, as recently as

¹⁴ Clay Waters, “STUDY: Be My (Leftist) Guest: How PBS’s False Objectivity Poisons Political Debate.” Newsbusters, Media Research Center, March 27, 2023. <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/clay-waters/2023/03/27/study-be-my-leftist-guest-how-pbss-false-objectivity-poisons>

¹⁵ Rich Noyes, “Study: Taxpayer-Subsidized PBS Whacks GOP with 85% Negative News.” Newsbusters, Media Research Center, May 16, 2023. <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/rich-noyes/2023/05/16/study-taxpayer-subsidized-pbs-whacks-gop-85-negative-news>

¹⁶ Clay Waters, “STUDY: Hating Republicans, Hailing Democrats! PBS’s Very Biased 2024 Convention Coverage.” Newsbusters, Media Research Center, September 4, 2024. <https://www.newsbusters.org/blogs/nb/clay-waters/2024/09/04/study-hating-republicans-hailing-democrats-pbss-very-biased-2024>

¹⁷ Selena Simmons-Duffins, NPR, New research finds trans teens have high satisfaction with gender care, Oct. 23, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2024/10/23/nx-s1-5161428/trans-kids-regret-gender-affirming-care>

¹⁸ Simmons-Duffins, “Tim Walz’s state became a ‘trans refuge.’ Here’s what that means and how it happened.” Oct. 1, 2024. <https://www.npr.org/sections/shots-health-news/2024/10/01/nx-s1-5103113/minnesota-trans-refuge-walz-vance-transgender-rights>

¹⁹ American Public Media, August 9, 2005. AMERICAN PUBLIC MEDIA RECEIVES \$2.1 MILLION FROM TIDES FOUNDATION FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY DESK. <https://www.americanpublicmedia.org/blog/american-public-media-receives-2-1-million-from-tides-foundation-for-global-sustainability-desk>

2011, NPR's audience was liberal, but not²⁰ monolithically so. "Twenty-six percent of listeners described themselves as conservative, 23 percent as middle of the road, and 37 percent as liberal." Fast forward a dozen years, and you find that conservatives have voted with their feet. In 2023, pollsters found that only 11 percent of NPR listeners described themselves as very or somewhat conservative, while a whopping 67 percent of listeners said they were very or somewhat liberal. "We weren't just losing conservatives," wrote Mr. Berliner, "we were also losing moderates and traditional liberals."

Not that it should matter of what ethnicity their audience is, but the audience is also very white. Public broadcasting may preach diversity 24/7, but it doesn't practice it. As Berliner pointed out, "In 2023, according to our demographic research, 6 percent of our news audience was black, far short of the overall U.S. adult population, which is 14.4 percent black. And Hispanics were only 7 percent, compared to the overall Hispanic adult population, around 19 percent. Our news audience doesn't come close to reflecting America. It's overwhelmingly white and progressive, and clustered around coastal cities and college towns."

Given the overabundance of the evidence stacked against it—a demonstrated and quantifiable high level of bias in favor of one political side; the fact that because this is the side that believes in government largess, the backing the stations give in return for the appropriations amounts to self-serving electoral tampering; the justification if not abetting of violence; the refusal to do its job, that is, use journalism as a tool, to parse contentious assertions that threaten to upend society; the attempted toppling of a sitting president; the dangerous censoring of news on health matters; the fact that public broadcasting has outlived any usefulness it ever enjoyed in terms of its educational role; the regressive nature of this tax; the fact that we're broke—one has to wonder how the public

broadcasters have managed to suckle so long on the public teat. Sixty years should have been long enough to wean a dependent entity and let it survive on its own.

The fact, however, is that public broadcasting doesn't just survive day to day, but has grown self-assured. Its bias is so naked because its leaders have been convinced by their past experience that they can, to borrow a phrase, stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and they still wouldn't lose support in Congress. Exhibit A of this cockiness is last year's choice of one of our witnesses, Katherine Maher, as NPR CEO.

Ms. Maher has many wonderful qualities, I am sure. Given her ability to navigate the upper reaches of our cultural institutions, she would have to be very smart. Maher, however, has a long record of comments which leave zero doubt that she's not just a committed progressive, but someone whose woke disdain for freedom of expression disqualifies her from being anywhere close to the levers of power at a media institution. She railed at an Atlantic Council event in June, 2021, that our most important protections for free speech got in the way of censoring ideas she disagreed with—"The number one challenge here that we see is, of course, the First Amendment in the United States"—and three months later said in a TED Talk that truth stands in the way of forging a liberal consensus where pesky disagreements no longer are allowed: "Our reverence for the truth might be a distraction, that's getting in the way of finding common ground and getting things done."²¹ Ms. Maher also believes that we are in the midst of something Marxists call "late-stage capitalism"—have no fear, Marxists have been celebrating that capitalism, that is, freedom, is about to end since the middle of the 19th century—which is ravaging the environment.²² She compares driving cars to smoking cigarettes and is very worried about "toxic masculinity."²³ And what does she think of President Trump? He's a "deranged, racist

²⁰ Rose Conlon, 'Everyone's scared': Transgender Kansans brace for new law. Kansas News Service, PBS. May 26, 2023.

<https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/everyones-scared-transgender-kansans-brace-for-new-law/>

²¹ Lindsay Kornick, Hanna Panreck, Fox News, "NPR boss once called the First Amendment a 'challenge'"

and 'reverence for the truth' a distraction" [NPR boss once called the First Amendment a 'challenge' and 'reverence for the truth' a distraction](#)

²² Katherine Maher June 25, 2021 tweet.

<https://x.com/krmaher/status/1408539600407121923>

²³ Chris Rufo, "Quotations From Chairman Maher." City Journal. April 17, 2024 <https://www.city-journal.org/article/quotations-from-chairman-maher>

sociopath,” she tweeted on May 14, 2020.²⁴

Ms. Maher is of course entitled to her views, and this is a free country. The question for you is whether NPR, which takes money from all Americans, is entitled to appoint as its leader someone with such incredibly lopsided views, shared by only a small fraction of her funders. The important thing for us here is that her appointment shows that NPR feels it is untouchable, that it can violate the public trust at will. Appointing her was poking conservatives in the eye, or the equivalent of shooting someone in the middle of Fifth Avenue.

Public broadcasting has gained this self-assuredness through stellar lobbying. It has the votes of all Democrats in Congress, as I said, and just enough Republicans to prevent defunding and dissolution, and allow it to claim bipartisan support. Public broadcasting’s main lobbyist, American Public Television Stations (APTS), assiduously courts these Republicans, especially those in the appropriations committees, and charms them with awards every year.

And what are the arguments they make to these Members, and to Americans at large? Public broadcasters no longer rely as much as they used to on the claim that their main benefit is educational services, now that its educational content has been much diminished and PBS has shifted to even more adult programming.²⁵ So the “it’s for the children” routine, known to many scoundrels throughout the ages, is becoming less effective. Sesame Street has now gone private, the Cookie Monster has become health-conscious and Bert and Ernie have emerged as gay icons,²⁶ a development covered as a news story in the legacy media.

Its main arguments today are that it is needed for weather emergencies in hard-to-reach places, and because, without the public dole, local news coverage does not exist. The syllogism seems to be, no public broadcasting, no local news; no local news, no democracy; ergo, no public broadcasting, no

democracy. “Simply put, cuts to public broadcasting funding significantly jeopardize public safety,” APTS CEO and President Kate Riley said just last month at a large annual meeting with other public broadcasting lobbyists and stakeholders.²⁷ Public broadcasting has “some of the last locally controlled media in the country,” Riley added.

Neither of these two claims are true. Even Alaska, one of our most isolated states, has the level of internet penetration that would allow for the monitoring of weather events. The Census Bureau tells us that 96.6 percent of Alaskan households have a computer at home, while 90.6 percent of households have broadband subscriptions.²⁸ A higher percentage of households must have mobile phones.

As for the claim that the taxpayer is the last available business model for local news coverage, this is also fatuous. Executives at Current Publishing, which owns a chain of local newspapers, told me last week that they are very profitable and had a healthy business model. It was based, said one, “on not taking a political side, and not taking government money.”²⁹ Hoffman Publishing Group in Pennsylvania is another example. To believe that the only way to keep a local watchdog on government is for government to subsidize it with the money of taxpayers beggars belief. If anything, public broadcasting’s intrusion in the market crowds out more market supply for whatever demand there is for local news coverage.

I have made a case as to why public broadcasting is not just unnecessary and costly at a time when he desperately need to find savings, but dangerous, unjust and, yes, immoral. So what to do? Dissolving the CPB would be the best approach. It was set up by an act of Congress in 1967, and you can determine its fate. Defunding it by ceasing to appropriate money would be a second-best solution. I would urge you, however, not to try to repair it in some form. End it, don’t try to mend it. It would be

²⁴ Maher tweet, May 14, 2020

<https://x.com/krmaher/status/1260960520586145797>

²⁵ Gregory Wakeman, Current. December 22, 2022. “As kids move on, PBS and stations revamp afternoon schedules to attract adults.”

<https://archive.is/jkNx0#selection-977.0-977.78>

²⁶ Kalhan Rosenblatt, NBC News. Sept. 18, 2018.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/bert->

[ernie-are-gay-couple-sesame-street-writer-claims-n910701](https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/bert-ernie-are-gay-couple-sesame-street-writer-claims-n910701)

²⁷ Tom Butts, Public TV Sounds Alarm Over Funding Threats, TVTech, February 25, 2025. [Public TV Sounds Alarm Over Funding Threats | TV Tech](https://www.pvtv.org/news/public-tv-sounds-alarm-over-funding-threats/)

²⁸ U.S. Census, QuickFacts, Alaska.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/AK/INT100223#INT100223>

²⁹ Conversations with the author.

impossible. Others have tried, and they have utterly failed. Also, don't expect a white swan event, like, say, Ms. Maher's sudden departure, to fix anything. Former CEO Vivian Schiller also departed under a cloud after the Juan Williams controversy. Not only did NPR not get better, it got more biased.

Now is the time to take these steps, and achieve what every Republican president since LBJ created the CPB in 1967 has tried to do—end public broadcasting. Today all our leaders, from President Trump, to Elon Musk, to, just days ago, National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, have called for, as Waltz put it, defunding “Insane taxpayer-funded PBS” and NPR.³⁰

What would happen to public radio and television stations? PBS, NPR, the CPB and APTS, as well as their supporters, like to say endlessly that the taxpayer accounts for a very small fraction of their budget, and that NPR and PBS get a tiny percentage of the appropriations. The first response is, great! If it's such small a portion of their income, then they won't miss it, and as I said earlier, our fiscal situation is such that we should not be wasting money of any amount.

But I would caution to look beyond the smoke and mirror of public broadcasting's claims. At her speech last month, the APTS's Riley said that 38 states also kick in \$257 million dollars a year to public television alone, which brings the amount of taxpayer money going to public broadcasting to three quarters of a million dollars. If public radio stations get an equal amount from these states, then that brings us up to a full billion dollars a year from the taxpayer. Moreover, the system plays a shell game in which the CPB sends around 70 percent of the moneys that Congress appropriates to the

different public broadcasters around the country. But then these stations turn around and purchase programming from PBS and NPR, so the money goes back to them.

And it doesn't stop there. Public broadcasting also receives grants from other parts of the federal government, such as the Department of Education, and many of the television and radio stations are housed in public universities that are funded by the taxpayers of those states, or in private universities that also receive hundreds of millions of dollars. This is a hidden subsidy that they also receive. Public broadcasting has in many different ways become the tawdry kept mistress that drains the family budget, a corrupt situation that must quickly come to an end.

Lastly, I am often told that if we withdraw the taxpayer teat, public broadcasting would fall even more prey to progressive funders such as George Soros or the Tides Foundation. My answer always is, how much further left can they go? There's no room left. And, ultimately, so what? Soros is an American and can do whatever he wants with his money as long as it is legal. I may not like the outcome he produces, but I defend his right to free expression. I don't care that the New York Times, MSNBC, and the Nation Magazine exist. Unlike Ms. Maher, I don't want to suppress speech with which I disagree. The question here, as I have said repeatedly, boils down to one of justice, morality, and as Jefferson said, tyranny.

Thank you for very much for your time and attention.

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³⁰ Mike Waltz tweet, March 21.
<https://x.com/MikeWaltz47/status/1903104349078745374>

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