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Federal Cuts Threaten Local Public Media Stations Nationwide

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Congress has voted to rescind over \$1 billion in federal support for public broadcasting, a move that will leave local television and radio stations, particularly in rural America, facing steep financial challenges and possible programming cuts as early as October.

In a late-night vote, the United States House of Representatives narrowly passed a bill rolling back \$1.1 billion in funding previously allocated to public media. The measure,

supported by a 216-213 vote and backed predominantly by Republicans, now heads to President Donald Trump's desk for final approval. The legislation targets funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), an entity that has long received federal backing despite ongoing concerns over media bias and government overspending.

Across New Mexico alone, 18 stations stand to lose more than \$5.8 million in funding. Outlets like New Mexico PBS (NMPBS) and KUNM Radio say they are preparing for significant adjustments to their operations. Jeff Pope, general manager of KUNM, warned the station may lose nearly \$240,000, representing 12% of its funding. "Nobody pivots in nine weeks to replace that kind of money," Pope said. Layoffs and reduced programming are on the table, though he remains hopeful that stations can collaborate and innovate to stretch their resources.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), originally founded to ensure universal access to educational and cultural programming, has faced criticism from conservatives for years. Calls to eliminate CPB funding have appeared in policy proposals from the Heritage Foundation, including Project 2025, a framework for President Trump's potential second term. Critics argue that taxpayer dollars should not fund media platforms that often promote left-leaning perspectives while sidelining conservative viewpoints.

Not all Republicans supported the cuts. Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska defended the role of local stations, especially in rural regions where they serve as essential sources of emergency information. The night of the vote, an earthquake in Alaska underscored her point, with local National Public Radio (NPR) stations issuing timely alerts.

While larger stations like NMPBS in Albuquerque may weather the storm thanks to diversified revenue streams and strong community backing, smaller outlets face far greater risk. General Manager Franz Joachim noted that while NMPBS receives roughly \$1.7 million from CPB about 18% of its budget the station also benefits from a stable donor base and support from the University of New Mexico, which provides facilities and equipment.

Still, stations like KRWG-TV in Las Cruces are bracing for substantial losses. General Manager Adrian Valarde said the outlet is set to lose over \$900,000 in CPB funding. "Community-supported media organisations play a critical role in serving the public," he stated, emphasising that smaller, rural stations are particularly vulnerable to federal cuts.

Native Public Media, which supports a network of radio stations operated by Native American communities, warned that the elimination of CPB funding could lead to widespread closures. The group labelled the cuts a threat to public safety and communication access in remote areas.

As the October deadline approaches, stations are ramping up fundraising efforts to plug the gaps. NMPBS has already launched a donor campaign, urging viewers to step up. While the road ahead will be difficult for many public broadcasters, the debate over whether taxpayer funds should support partisan media content will likely persist well beyond this budget cycle.