

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Marjorie Taylor Greene
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Melanie Stansbury
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Hearing on “Anti-American Airwaves: Holding the Heads of NPR and PBS Accountable”

Dear Chairwoman Greene and Ranking Member Stansbury,

We, a coalition of press freedom organizations, urge the Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency to approach its examination of public broadcasting with the understanding that press freedom is not a partisan issue, rather a vital part of American democracy.

The Founders recognized the indispensable function of journalism in a democratic society by enshrining press freedom in the First Amendment. This constitutional protection affirms the press’s role as the Fourth Estate, ensuring journalists can report freely without fear or favor – and without governmental or political interference. Other House subcommittees have [held hearings](#) recognizing the importance of press freedom and fighting back against efforts by the government to control journalism.

Transparency and accountability in publicly funded institutions is important, and we recognize that Congress plays an important role in ensuring such oversight. It is critical that such valuable oversight be approached within appropriate guardrails in order for Members of Congress to avoid exerting direct or indirect pressure. The public broadcasting system consists of nearly 1,500 independent, locally run public radio and television stations that each make their own decisions about what coverage and programming best serve their community. It is essential that government oversight not threaten the editorial independence of these stations or the other public broadcasting entities that enable stations to serve each of your districts.

Millions of Americans, particularly in rural areas, rely on public broadcasting as a source of fact-based reporting on their local communities. In order to serve the needs of that public, it is critical that public media remains free of government or political influence, and it is Congress’s responsibility to ensure that. As evidenced by the financial struggles facing local news outlets, resulting in “news deserts” across America, this vital local reporting is often not profitable. And

yet local public media stations have actually invested more into their newsrooms and, in many communities, are the only source of free, reliable, and local news and emergency information. If public media cannot fulfill this role effectively, the private sector is unlikely to step in.

We urge the Subcommittee to embrace the importance of a pluralistic, free press throughout the hearing, and to be mindful that using rhetoric that devalues the contributions of journalism could fuel attacks on journalists and media outlets for their reporting, regardless of their perceived or real political persuasion. Such language can increase the risks journalists face when investigating public officials of any political leaning. As an example, last month a judge in Mississippi unconstitutionally [ordered](#) a newspaper to delete an editorial critical of a Democratic mayoral administration. Content-based retribution against public media at the federal level will send a message to local officials that retaliating against journalists they dislike is acceptable.

For years, U.S. media have faced significant challenges in financial sustainability and market competition. These challenges have been exacerbated by growing public mistrust across the political spectrum, fueled by polarization in public discourse. Journalists increasingly contend with threats, violence, and unwarranted arrest, further endangering press freedom. A November report from the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) [highlighted](#) rising threats to journalists, including [violence](#), [arrests](#), [harassment](#), legal battles, and [criminalization](#). The U.S. Press Freedom Tracker, a project of Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF), demonstrates that such attacks are on the rise – and conservative journalists are [among the victims](#). This hearing is happening in the context of this anti-media vitriol and fear mongering.

That is why the tone and conduct of the proceedings matter. The American public deserves access to quality, independent journalism, regardless of geography, income, creed, or political views. Public broadcasting delivers on this vital need by providing high-quality, fact-based reporting to the American public, including underserved communities across the nation.

Congressional scrutiny of public broadcasting must not undermine the ability of journalists to report the news safely and without fear of reprisal. Otherwise, a dangerous precedent will be set that could further erode trust in the media and undermine press freedom more broadly.

We appreciate your attention to this critical matter and stand ready to support bipartisan Congressional efforts that uphold press freedom and the rights and safety of all journalists in the United States.

Sincerely,

Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)
Freedom of the Press Foundation (FPF)
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

CC:

Representative Eric Burlison (MO-07)

Representative Tim Burchett (TN-02)

Representative Greg Casar (TX-35)

Representative Michael Cloud (TX-27)

Representative Jasmine Crockett (TX-30)

Representative Pat Fallon (TX-04)

Representative Robert Garcia (CA-42)

Representative Brandon Gill (TX-26)

Representative Brian Jack (GA-03)

Representative Stephen Lynch (MA-08)

Representative Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)

Representative William Timmons (SC-04)