

**In regards to Senate Bill 139: Operating Budget**

I respectfully request the consideration of the Finance Committee on the topic of state funding for Public Radio. I understand that the State of Alaska faces a budget crisis. Yet I believe that eliminating funding for Public Radio will destroy an essential communications network here in rural Alaska.

I live in the island community of Petersburg, where the radio station provides many services, in terms of local, statewide, national and international news, community announcements and the airing of public meetings. KFSK is designated our local Emergency Broadcasting station for natural disasters and Amber Alerts.

A few weeks ago, the importance of KFSK's role in emergency broadcasting became very real when an inmate escaped from the downtown jail on a weekday morning, and remained at large as police pursued him through town. He remained at large for five hours. During that time the hospital and the school were both locked down.

I would not have wanted to wait for Channel 2 Evening news in Anchorage to report on the story. Nor would I want to wait 6 days for the weekly paper to tell me what was happening.

This is not the first lockdown here in town. I still remember the looks on the faces of the women I worked with when the school was locked down for the first time. It was good we had KFSK announcing the children were safe, and what was happening as police pursued another potentially dangerous individual.

KFSK also was instrumental in keeping the community and outlying areas informed when we had a tsunami warning in effect a few years ago.

In some places like Anchorage, there are other radio stations that can act as emergency broadcasters. That is not available here in many rural parts of the State. Public radio provides a literal lifeline in these places.

Some legislators have asked "what about cellphones and Smartphones and computers?"

I work at the local Clinic, and at the Courthouse. I have also worked at the Public Library. In my experience, there is a large percentage of people in our town and the outlying areas who cannot afford regular cellphone service, or a computer, or cable service. Often people have shared phones, short-term prepaid phones or use the computer at the Public Library. This does not afford ready access to information when there is an emergency.

I am asking you not to severely cut the funds to Public Broadcasting. Eliminating funding will cause public radio stations like KFSK to lose federal funding, and our budgets cannot sustain this hit. Public radio stations would close and an essential rural communication service would be lost.

I recognize the dire situation you face trying to come up with a state budget. I work three jobs trying to meet my budget. These are tough economic times. I do support a percentage income tax based on the amount of federal income tax a person pays. I also believe that perhaps receiving permanent fund could be based on income level as well. There are people in rural areas that have few other sources of income at all.

Thank you for your consideration.

Julie Hursey

PO Box 213

Petersburg, Alaska