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To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
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Senate Finance Committee Testimony – March 8, 2016

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Last month I was the only “public” attendee at the APTI board meeting in Anchorage. I learned that the Anchorage stations will experience painful cutbacks under the current budget proposals. The scenario presented by the APTI CFO, however, outlined the even more extensive domino effect of lost revenue - the loss of both federal and underwriter funding and the closing of most rural stations. The impact of cuts will be both disproportionate and devastating for rural Alaskans. KSKA can probably continue to fund “Alaska News Nightly” but there will be no rural news feed to the program and no one able to hear the program outside of the railbelt. It will no longer be statewide news nor will it reach a statewide audience. Without bush access to statewide programming, *Gavel to Gavel* will become a memory of a former time when the Alaska legislature chose to inform and include all the citizens of the state in legislative affairs.

As members of the Senate Finance Committee you have heard the “talking points” from multiple individuals regarding the proposed cuts to public broadcasting in the FY17 budget. I’ll add my own list of public broadcasting resources important to me: APRN and NPR reporting, PBS programming - both entertainment and news/information, local news and community interaction.

“Zero” funding can no longer be considered a prudent fiscal reduction or belt tightening – especially on top of the deep cuts already in the current year’s budget – it means the outright end to public radio and television in the bush and to the entire state wide public broadcasting network. There are no commercial stations in the bush to fill the gap left by the loss of public broadcasting. Even in the leanest of state budgets in the past, the old RATNET was recognized as an important service to maintain.

Avalanches are an Alaskan reality. Even seasoned backcountry skiers are never 100% sure of the consequences of a winter ski trip. The proposed reduction in funding to public broadcasting is like skiing across the face of a steep slope – exhilarating but highly dangerous and most likely fatal. The committee may feel forced onto dangerous slopes to deal with our fiscal crisis – but I urge extreme caution because of the snowballing effect of cuts to the future of Alaska Public Broadcasting across the state.

The avalanche from “zero funding” is both predictable and avoidable. I challenge any on the committee whose budget knife is intentionally aimed at the jugular of public broadcasting not to posture behind fiscal responsibility but to have the honesty to tell the public that their intention is not just to defund, but to kill the public broadcast system that helps to bind urban and bush Alaska together as one state. Alaskans have repeatedly voiced their willingness to be taxed and/or receive reduced PFDs in order to maintain desired state services. Listen to them. Please restore the proposed budget cuts and maintain the integrity of Public Broadcasting.