

From: [Brenda Hewitt](mailto:Brenda.Hewitt)
To: [Senate Finance Committee](#)
Subject: Fwd: Hb72
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Brenda (Hewitt) Fuller

Begin forwarded message:

From: Brenda Hewitt <brenda@hewitt.net>
Date: March 29, 2015 at 9:21:24 PM CDT
To: Pete Kelly <Senator.Pete.Kelly@akleg.gov>, "Senator.donny.olsen@akleg.gov" <Senator.donny.olsen@akleg.gov>, "senator.anna.mackinnon@akleg.gov" <senator.anna.mackinnon@akleg.gov>, "senator.click.bishop@akleg.gov" <senator.click.bishop@akleg.gov>, "senator.peter.micciche@akleg.gov" <senator.peter.micciche@akleg.gov>, "senator.lyman.hoffman@akleg.gov" <senator.lyman.hoffman@akleg.gov>, "senator.mike.dunleavy@akleg.gov" <senator.mike.dunleavy@akleg.gov>
Subject: Hb72

Official Testimony to HB 72: Operating Budget

March 30, 2015

From: Brenda Hewitt

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[1890 Glacier Ave #304](#)

[Juneau, Alaska](#)

To: Co-Chairs Senators MacKinnon and Kelly and esteemed members of the Senate Finance Committee

I'm compelled to offer testimony regarding the drastic cut suggested by the Finance Subcommittee on Administration to the Alaska Public Broadcast Commission, radio and TV. The drastic elimination of all state funding will result in most of the rural stations losing their federal funding will force them to

go off the air.

Our late, great Senator Ted Stevens was one of the strongest and most stalwart supporter of the public broadcasting system. He knew, without it, many people in Alaska would not be able to receive daily news or weather – period. Public broadcasting is local radio at its best. Local donors, local underwriting, coverage of local events such as city council and borough assembly meetings, local on air talent, emergency broadcasting and local news are just some of the features. There are a number of programs and services public broadcasting can offer that is not commercially viable for a for-profit station.

Over the decades I've served as a volunteer, financial supporter and listener/viewer of Alaska's public broadcasting system. For the last ten years, I've sat on the Alaska Broadcast Commission. I want to share what these experiences have given me – a true appreciation for the entire system. While living in Haines, I depended on public radio for daily news because we did not have a daily paper or the Internet. Many small towns and villages depend on public broadcasting and they will gladly tell you that they cannot provide their constituents programming without the help of the urban stations. While living in Juneau and Fairbanks I enjoyed listening to my local government bodies deliberate as well as some of the terrific programming.

Public Broadcasting enjoyed a budget of \$7.2 million back in the 90s but for the past 7 or 8 years it has been stagnate at \$4.2 million. Stagnation is like dying by paper cuts as anyone who runs a business well knows but I've watched these stations become more and more creative with their collaborations. It means fewer local stories but at least they are still able to be Alaskan stories – like APRN where they can share the news from around the state or coverage of AFN. They've pooled together to share engineering staff and CoastAlaska helps coordinate the fundraising for nearly a third of the stations just to name a few of the ways they've dealt with the shrinking funds. Public broadcasting gives the state a 6:1 return on their investment.

I don't need to tell you about the value of Gavel to Gavel and how that has helped your constituents see and hear what's happening in their state's capital. You probably know the value of the public education mission of the television stations. Not only Big Bird and Alaska Nightly News but I recall a wonderful documentary on Alaska's Constitution, Bartlett, Suicide prevention counseling and a story highlighting the Alaska Marine Highway's 50 years. If we don't document and tell Alaska's stories from Alaska's perspective – we are only left with what the Lower 48 dishes out.

Blogs and the Internet do not provide solid journalism. They do not cover local meetings, they provide opinions but they cannot provide on a daily basis what is offered by public radio. The Internet is not pervasive and ubiquitous in rural Alaska. Even if it were, how many people would be able to search out all the news they receive from public radio?

I fully understand, as most Alaskans do, that these times require all of us to tighten our belts. 5-8% is what I've heard bantered about. I'm not sure how the stations will deal with it but they will figure out, as will the commission but a 100% cut! It is not even within my realm of understanding of how that could be played out.

I might suggest cutting travel within the departments, governor's office, legislature and boards and commissions until times get better. Use technology to host meetings through computers whenever possible, but crippling infrastructure such as public broadcasting is certainly not a wise cut.

Please do not accept this portion of the subcommittee's recommendation. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Thank you.

Brenda Hewitt

Sent from my iPad