

**From:** [George Schaaf](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Restore funding for public broadcasting  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 31, 2015 7:54:19 AM

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Members of the Committee:

I am writing to ask that you restore funding for public broadcasting in Alaska in the interest of public safety, government transparency, and to maintain one of the most successful public-private partnerships in Alaska.

Current funding for public broadcasting is already half of what it was 20 years ago. What remains is critically important to maintain emergency communications statewide, especially for the nearly 100,000 Alaskans who live in rural areas. In 1964, the most powerful earthquake ever recorded in North America (the third biggest in the history of the world) struck Alaska. In times of crisis, the safety of every Alaskan depends on their ability to access news and information. When disaster strikes again, the delicate fiberoptic cables, microwave links, and power grid that support cellular phones and Internet communications in Alaska will fail. Despite recent advances in mobile technology, the Emergency Broadcast System (EBS) remains the backbone of emergency management communications. State funding for public broadcasting directly supports the infrastructure -- repeaters, transmitters, power generation -- that allows EBS to reach Alaskans when they need it most. If this funding is not restored, transmitters across Alaska will go off the air, abandoning some of our state's most vulnerable residents and communities.

Public broadcasting is also essential to maintain government transparency through programs like Gavel-to-Gavel. While the cost to broadcast the Legislative session is largely paid by the citizens of Juneau, the local radio and television stations that deliver this programming to your constituents depend on state funding. At a minimum, state government has a responsibility to make its deliberations accessible and visible to the citizens of Alaska. No matter where the Legislature meets, public broadcasting is the only way to guarantee that the largest number of Alaskans are able to participate. If this funding is eliminated, the content provided by Gavel-to-Gavel will not reach your constituents across our vast state.

Finally, the state's financial support of public broadcasting is leveraged many times over through one of the most successful public-private partnerships in the country. While funding for public broadcasting represents just 0.036% of the state's total operating budget and less than 0.4% of the current deficit, it is matched over and over again by donations from private citizens, corporations, philanthropic foundations, and others. This collaboration yields some of the best locally produced journalism in the state, as well as programs that support the outreach efforts of Alaska's critical nonprofit sector. As state government looks to maintain service levels in the face of declining budgets, partnerships like this will be essential. Now is not the time to abandon the most successful public-private partnership in Alaska.

I encourage the Committee to restore funding for public broadcasting to the level recommended by Gov. Walker in order to preserve public safety, government transparency, and to continue leveraging public funds to the maximum extent possible. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in your discussion about this vital issue.

Very truly yours,

George Schaaf

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