

**From:** [Jerry Smetzer](#)  
**To:** [Senate Finance Committee](#)  
**Subject:** Alaska Senate Finance Committee consideration of appropriations to public radio and television in Alaska's towns and villages.  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 31, 2015 9:43:34 AM

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**Dear ladies and gentlemen of the Senate Finance Committee:**

I am a long-time member of the non-profit corporation known most commonly by their radio call sign as KTOO in Juneau, Alaska. I occasionally volunteer my personal time to the station during pledge drives, and am an annual contributor of enough of my own money to the station's operations to be a member of their Summit Club. I am also a member of KTOO's Community Advisory Board which meets three times a year for one hour during lunch. I have to bring my own lunch to those meetings. KTOO does not offer free coffee. I freely offer my personal time and personal funds to KTOO because I believe in supporting a well-equipped, decently financed, and competently staffed news, programming, and communication system in my community.

And I believe that public funds and support from federal, state, and local governments, in partnership with private and non-profit corporations - with help from many private, unpaid volunteers like me - need to be appropriated annually. **Annual appropriations are the only way residents in every community in the state can have reasonably reliable, real-time, two-way communications access to the residents of every other community.**

**Therefore,** I am writing to urge each of the members of your committee to support the continued appropriation of "backbone" funds essential to the maintenance and operations of public radio and television outlets across the state of Alaska. More importantly, I recommend that financing these services be increased in the budget now under your consideration, and that public communications be considered in the same way, for budgeting purposes, as other basic community services like police and fire protection.

Public financing and support of non-commercial radio and television communications across the state of Alaska tie the people of Alaska together. These communications occur increasingly in real time as communications technology improves. At the very least this communication capability is the backbone of a statewide system of public safety when time is of the essence following community disaster, or private injury or sickness. Most importantly, communications technologies in education and medicine are maturing rapidly, and are making it possible to bring interactive distance education, and real time medical services and procedures into every community in Alaska.

**Finally, Alaska's publicly financed radio and television systems connect Alaskans with the rest of the world,** and make it possible for Alaskans in every community to participate in events outside our community and across the planet using technologies like those of KTOO's 360 North and KTOO.org. With those facilities residents here can be as well-educated, as well-informed on the news of the day, and as up-to-date on the cultural and historic events of our times, as the people in all the great cities of the world.

**To the members of this committee:** Please don't reduce the amount of state of Alaska general funds, under consideration by your committee, or take them away from the mix of public, private, non-profit, and personal funds, and volunteer time that are necessary to maintain the operation of Alaska's public communication's systems and programming. Rather, do a good

thing and propose an increase in the amount of those state general funds for the 2016 fiscal year.

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