

As Corporation for Public Broadcasting shuts down, what will that mean on airwaves?

By Caitlin Babcock, *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 6, 2025 (shortened)

The shutdown of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting doesn't mean the end of public radio and television in America, but it does mean major changes are on the way.

The government-authorized corporation announced Aug. 1 it will begin to wind down its operations after Congress rescinded about \$1.1 billion of its funding. The CPB is a private nonprofit corporation that helps fund public television and radio programming, as well as about 1,500 locally managed radio and TV stations across the United States.

While known for funding popular programming from *Sesame Street* to Ken Burns documentaries, and intended to be nonpartisan, the CPB has long faced conservative critics alleging that it has a liberal bias. When Republicans gained unified control of Congress this year, President Donald Trump pushed for the elimination of the CPB's funding.

However, the CPB shutdown is expected to have a greater impact on stations that serve local communities than on PBS and NPR.

Congress founded the CPB in 1967 with the goal of supporting noncommercial, educational, and accessible broadcasting. Through taxpayer support, it has provided about 15% of funding for the Public Broadcasting Service, and 1% of the funding for NPR—plus the money that flows indirectly through its support of local stations.

PBS is a nonprofit organization that distributes programming to its member stations.

The vast majority of the CPB's funds—about 70%—go directly to local TV and radio stations. The degree to which these stations depend on federal support can vary considerably, with stations that serve rural communities generally being the most vulnerable to funding cuts.

A study by the Public Media Co., an advisory firm, found that 78 radio stations and 37 TV stations across the country receive more than 30% of their funding from the CPB, putting them at risk of going dark now that this funding is shutting off. Most of them serve rural areas.

In the days since the CPB lost its funding, public radio listeners and public television viewers have mobilized to deliver an outpouring of donations. But for the stations that most rely on federal funding, the future is still uncertain.

Tom Davidson, a media professor at Pennsylvania State University, says he worries the country will end up with a "patchwork system where some cities, some communities, some markets are just fine, and others are completely bereft."

Congress has historically provided the CPB with funds on a yearly basis. But in July, congressional Republicans spearheaded the passage of a rescissions bill that clawed back about \$1.1 billion in money that had already been approved for the CPB's next two fiscal years. Shortly after the bill was passed, the Senate advanced an appropriations bill that didn't include any funding for the CPB, deepening its financial straits.

The CPB awards most of its funding to local stations through community service grants. All of those grants have already been given out for this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

Local TV and radio stations often play a critical role in alerting communities about natural disasters. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) can send emergency alerts directly to certain stations, which relay that same message to other stations in the affected area. In rural areas where communities lack reliable internet, radio can sometimes be people's best means of receiving these warnings. If stations are forced to shutter operations, that could leave affected communities with one fewer way to receive emergency information.

Some stations may also lose money they had received to maintain the infrastructure that allowed for these alerts. In 2022, Congress set aside money for FEMA to give to the CPB, which then distributed that money to stations to help upgrade their emergency alert infrastructure.