

Bush Seeks to Slash Public Programming

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National News Reporter

Big Bird, Kermit the Frog and Tinky Winky may take extended vacations, and Fresh Air could be blown out the window as President Bush has once again proposed to cut funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

The president has tried in the past to cut funding to the CPB, but each time has failed.

The CPB, created by Congress in 1967, is a non-profit private organization that, according to its website, "is the largest single source of funding for public television and radio programming." CPB manages both the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and National Public Radio (NPR).

Michael Riksen, vice president, government relations for NPR, explained the severity of the proposed cuts. Bush was seeking to cut up to \$147 million of the \$400 million that Congress had set aside for public broadcasting.

"The effects of these cuts would be crippling," Riksen continued. "It would mean the cancellation of local programming, and the small

years," Lively said. "It would hurt; we are [already] lean, it's pretty much bone and muscle."

However, he said he had learned from previous experiences that this cut may not go through.

"I don't get too worked up about this at this stage. We have seen this happen year after year, and we see no change. We'll have a better idea in June whether there will be a serious threat to our funding stream," Lively said. "Usually Congress examines the issue and sees the wisdom of investing in the nation's public broadcasting."

Terry Green, general manager for KUSP, which describes itself as "Central Coast Public Radio," has seen the president try, and fail, to reduce the government grant to public radio.

"If the Congress were to go with the White House's recommendations, it would mean a drop in funding for KUSP," he said. "In recent years the people who watch public television and listen to public radio have been very effective in making the case to Congress that it's important that the federal government support public television and radio."

When asked why he felt that public broadcasting had been

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Michael Riksen,
NPR Vice President, Government Relations

rural and minority stations that depend on these grants for the majority of their funding would most certainly face closure."

Duncan Lively, general manager for KAZU, an NPR station in the Monterey area, feels that the cuts could hurt public radio stations which are already relatively low on funds.

"The proposed cut is that effectively 25 percent of what we receive from CPB would effectively be eliminated. That is about 11 percent of our budget, what we get from there, and it's been in decline over the past few

publicly resurrected after facing cuts every year, Risken said, "Every day public broadcasting touches millions of lives, and if we're lucky, our programming will change a life for the better."

Green pointed out that the makeup of Congress has changed dramatically this year, but he was confident that public radio still had Congressional support.

"The Democrats have been out of power for 12 years, so it's hard to tell," Green said. "One of the nice things about public radio and television is it's always

President's new budget squeezes funding for public television and radio stations



Dylan Murphy | CHP



had broad support in Congress, even though the Republican leadership in Congress have been less supportive of public broadcasting than the Republican rank and file."

Amaya Smith, a spokesperson for the Democratic National Committee, feels that Congressional support will play an important role in preserving funding for public broadcasting.

"I think you can look at the president's overall budget, he is cutting No Child Left Behind, education, children's health insurance... It's no surprise that CPB made it onto the chopping block," she said. "In the past it's something you've seen Democrats advocate for, and you'll see Democrats advocate for restoring these funds."

The Republican National Committee was unavailable for comment.

Lively felt that these legislative processes were a classic example of the split branches of government.

"It's a classic civics lesson: the president proposes, the Congress disposes," Lively said. "We don't broadcast the Republicans, we don't broadcast the Democrats. We broadcast the citizens."

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