

Corporation for Public Broadcasting closes down in face of Trump attacks

David Walsh
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On Monday, the Board of Directors of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) voted to dissolve the 58-year-old organization. The action follows the elimination of all federal funding for the agency by Congress, on the demand of the Trump White House, earlier this year.

Created by the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, the CPB was established to “steward” federal investment in public television and radio and to protect the independence of public media. It did not own or operate radio or television stations, but was mandated to assist in distributing federal funding and to offer overall support for the public media system.

The CPB’s dissolution was triggered by the “rescission package” passed by Congress and signed by Donald Trump in July 2025, which clawed back approximately \$1.1 billion in funding earmarked for fiscal years 2026 and 2027.

In August, CPB officials announced the majority of the organization’s approximately 100 staff positions would disappear when financing ran out in September. A small transition team would be maintained, they explained, until the present month to ensure “a responsible and orderly closeout of operations.”

The long-term impact on National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) and more than 1,500 local public media stations will likely be dramatic. The funding for NPR and PBS comes from a number of sources, as they have never been properly funded by the federal government. NPR only receives a small amount, some 1 percent, of its funding directly from the federal government. PBS receives approximately 15 percent of its money from the government.

The majority of the CPB’s appropriations went to the various local public television and radio stations through grants. These stations choose to become members of PBS or NPR and pay dues and fees to the national organizations for programming and other services. It is widely predicted that stations in rural areas and smaller towns, many of which are dependent on the CPB for funds, will struggle to survive.

Trump and the extreme right have long targeted the CPB,

NPR and PBS for their supposed liberal bias. Last April, the White House issued a statement, “The NPR, PBS Grift Has Ripped Us Off for Too Long,” demanding an end to all federal funding for public media. It claimed, “For years, American taxpayers have been on the hook for subsidizing National Public Radio (NPR) and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), which spread radical, woke propaganda disguised as ‘news.’”

In July, in advance of the vote in Congress on the “rescission” package, Trump issued this threatening message on social media: “It is very important that all Republicans adhere to my Recissions Bill and, in particular, DEFUND THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (PBS and NPR), which is worse than CNN & MSDNC [sic] put together,” Trump wrote. “Any Republican that votes to allow this monstrosity to continue broadcasting will not have my support or Endorsement.”

There is an element of fascist self-delusion in the attacks on the PBS and NPR. These outlets have been thoroughly cowed by right-wing attacks that began in earnest in the 1980s. Aside from the occasional valuable work on history and culture (Ken Burns and others), public broadcasting in the US has largely been engaged in making sure it did not face criticism from the far right.

As we have pointed out numerous times, the Trump administration is following in the footsteps of the Nazis in its cultural policies, attempting to subordinate every voice and institution to the fascist-nationalist line of the White House. Everything else is impermissible, “lunacy” and “Marxism.”

There are a couple of lessons from the CPB disaster. First, the cultural barbarism of the entire American ruling elite finds expression here. The Trump forces are cruder and more imbecilic than the Democrats, but hostility to critical voices is universal within the upper echelons of US society. They fear every “new word” because it is no longer a matter of reforms or adjustments, but of the life and death of their system.

Second, the Democratic Party and its cultural-bureaucratic

orbit are incapable of putting up the slightest serious resistance to the fascist barbarians. If the proceedings of a recent lawsuit are to be taken seriously, the rottenness and spinelessness of the CPB officialdom in particular have been spectacular.

In November, in an out-of-court settlement, the CPB was forced to agree to fulfill “a \$36 million, multi-year contract with NPR that it had yanked after pressure from the Trump White House.” (NPR)

What happened was this: in early April 2025, in the midst of frenzied attacks on public broadcasting from the White House, the CPB board agreed to extend a contract with NPR to distribute radio programs by satellite, an arrangement that “stretched back four decades. The amount included millions still due on the then-current contract.”

However, according to an online NPR account,

The next day, CPB’s board chair and two senior executives met with a top White House budget official who attested to her “intense dislike for NPR.” ...

And the day after that ... CPB reversed itself. CPB executive Kathy Merritt informed NPR’s top official over the satellite and distribution service that it had to be spun off: it could not be part of NPR. NPR refused to do so. CPB revised the scope of the contract and solicited new bids. NPR’s submission proved unsuccessful.

The CPB board “reversed itself” so precipitously in an effort to curry favor with Trump and the Republicans. NPR then went to court accusing the CPB of illegally reneging on the deal.

As NPR notes, over the course of the case,

mounting evidence appeared to demonstrate that CPB’s board chair and executives had acted against NPR in what turned out to be a futile attempt to salvage the corporation’s own future. ...

And further,

CPB’s change of mind—and NPR’s ensuing lawsuit—sparked consternation and unease within the larger public media ecosystem. The two organizations had served as partners for decades. But

that relationship frayed earlier this year, as the system came under attack from the Trump administration.

The CPB, PBS and NPR “formed a united front, at least publicly,” as they lobbied this past summer against the Trump-led campaign to “rescind” the one billion dollars or so already approved by Congress.

Behind the scenes, however, CPB and PBS officials signaled they would not object to pulling funding for NPR, which has drawn the lion’s share of Republicans’ accusations of liberal bias.

Charming.

Meanwhile, CPB officials reportedly developed a “strategy” of appealing to two Republican senators—John Barrasso of Wyoming and Shelley Moore Capito of West Virginia—from states where public media networks are especially popular.

But it was to no avail. The senators voted along with all but two of their Republican colleagues to successfully eliminate all funding for public media—helping to seal the fate of CPB.

The results of this entire process are devastating for employees of the CPB and the future of public broadcasting.



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