

Mr. AKIN. Well, that's a great way to end things up tonight. Thanks so much for joining us. I know the people of Arizona are tickled to see that their new Congressman is already earning his keep down here. And goodnight to you, and goodnight to my many colleagues and the people across America.

We're looking forward to a brighter day, but we have some tough decisions to make, and we're getting ready to make those even this week. God bless you all.

AMERICAN PUBLIC BROADCASTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, this is going to be one of the most pivotal weeks in the history of American public broadcasting. As early as tomorrow, we will be voting on a continuing resolution that would call for the elimination of all Federal government support for public broadcasting.

Now, I will admit, this is very personal to me. If this reckless act were to be taken, it would mean that my local award-winning public broadcasting station, Oregon Public Broadcasting, would lose \$2.4 million annually, funds that we use to invest serving Oregon and southwest Washington and a little bit of Idaho with programs that keep people informed, inspired, that help educate our youngest citizens. Actually, through the magic of Internet, people enjoy programming online across America because of the quality of Oregon Public Broadcasting.

Now, there's no question, as some of my colleagues were just discussing on the floor, that there is hard budget work ahead of us. I look forward to opportunities to eliminate unnecessary agricultural supports and rebalance those efforts. I look forward to dealing with helping rein in spiraling Medicare costs. Not eliminating health care reform, but accelerating opportunities to reform it and make it more efficient.

I look forward to looking at the largest area of expenditure dealing with the Defense Department and discretionary funding. Without question, there are a number of areas there, the American people know and understand, that can be adjusted.

However, we must do this in a way that is thoughtful and does not disproportionately impact our rural communities, our children, and universal access to high-quality TV and radio programming.

□ 2100

Funding for public broadcasting gives our communities a voice by covering local news and events in a way that weekly papers cannot and commercial radio and TV stations do not provide. Today's media is rarely locally owned. Huge corporations send managers to deal with papers and radio programs.

Public broadcasting is the only locally owned and managed media in America.

I am joined this evening by a couple of my colleagues, and I look forward to engaging in this conversation with them. I note I could start with my colleague from Kentucky, Congressman CHANDLER, a champion of public broadcasting, as well as a very fiscally conservative Member of Congress. Welcome this evening. I look forward to your thoughts and observations.

Mr. CHANDLER. Well, it is good to be here with you tonight. It is a tremendous opportunity to talk about something that is also very important to me. But I want to just start out by saying to my colleague from Oregon, Mr. BLUMENAUER, how appreciative I am and I think how appreciative so many people are across this country of your championing of public broadcasting over the years. You have been an incredible champion of that effort, and I just think it is marvelous because of what public broadcasting means to all of us.

As you mentioned earlier, we heard some of our Republican colleagues talking earlier about some of the budget efforts that were going to be made, and I must say we do need to have that discussion here in Washington. There is no question about it. It is a discussion that our President is now engaging in and the Congress is going to be engaging in in the next little bit about what programs we can cut, and there is no question that there are some that need to be cut.

We certainly need to get our fiscal house in order in this country. But zeroing out funding for one of the most successful public-private partnerships responsible for 21,000 good American jobs isn't the thing to do. In these tough economic times, more than ever, we need to support American jobs and invest in our people, and cutting funding for public broadcasting does neither.

Until now, public broadcasting has enjoyed strong bipartisan support. In fact, in my home State of Kentucky—and, by the way, I heard the gentleman from Oregon talk very much about the success that his public broadcasting system has had. I must say, ours in Kentucky has done rather well also, and it is something we are very, very proud of.

But in my home State of Kentucky, a Republican Governor actually provided Kentucky Educational Television, or KET, with its first operating budget in 1968, helping KET hit the airwaves, and it is now being very ably run by the daughter of one of my Republican predecessors in this office, Shae Hopkins. This station has touched countless people throughout the years, and today it is used by more than 1 million Kentuckians each week, in a State of only around 4 million. So that is a pretty significant number. You can see how important it is to our State.

But completely cutting all Corporation for Public Broadcasting funding

will make KET cut at least 31 full-time jobs and 20 part-time jobs. These cuts would be on top of the 24 percent workforce reduction that KET has already endured in the past 3 years. KET has said that this loss of staff could hinder their ability dramatically to serve our Commonwealth.

And our public radio, just like public radio all across the country, will certainly be affected. How many people across our great Nation wake up to NPR and "Morning Edition" and drive home to "All Things Considered"? It is a very, very important part of life, I know.

In my home State, we have stations like WEKU in Richmond, Kentucky, and WUKY in Lexington that touch all parts of Kentucky, including very rural parts of our Commonwealth. WEKU radio out of Richmond has been serving Kentucky since the 1930s, and they have already gone down 30 percent recently. And this, of course, again would force more layoffs.

Public broadcasting is uniquely American and should stay that way for future generations. My three children grew up watching Sesame Street just like I did when I was a kid, and countless others receive basic skills and workplace education, and some even receive help with college credit courses through KET. WEKU and WUKY provide local programming and local news that can't be found elsewhere.

So, please, please join me today in support of public broadcasting. These stations are too important, and we just simply cannot let them go away.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you. I appreciate your eloquence, Congressman CHANDLER, your long-standing support for public broadcasting, helping us have a constructive dialogue here in Congress to make it better.

Mr. CHANDLER. Well, another thing that it does, of course, if I may, it increases the civility of our discourse. In a time when so many stations are sensationalizing the news, there is one place that we can be sure that we can get a civil dialogue and both sides of the story, and that is public broadcasting.

So thank you so much for all you do.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Before I turn to my good friend from California, Congressman FARR, I just want to follow up on one point that you made, because this is vital infrastructure that connects Americans, particularly in rural and small town America, people who otherwise would not have access.

There is always going to be public broadcasting in New York, Washington, D.C., or San Francisco. But it is rural and small town America that is going to pay the price if we lose the support for this infrastructure. Again, being very parochial, but it is not uncommon for what happens in the Midwest, in Kansas, in Texas. In rural Oregon, it costs 11 times as much to extend the signal to remote Burns, Oregon, in eastern Oregon, than to deal in the metropolitan area. So these 1,300

independently owned and operated public broadcasting stations are going to be severely crippled in terms of their ability to meet the needs of rural and small town America.

I am going to speak in a few moments about some of the unique programming, but the point is that the signal itself depends on the type of subsidy we are talking about here.

Now, if I may turn to my colleague who has been a supporter of public broadcasting back in the day when he was a local official in dealing in the California Legislature, Congressman SAM FARR.

Mr. FARR. Thank you very much. Thank you for inviting me. This is a very important discussion. I wish we could do it really in an open debate where we could have a debate on this, because I don't think that there is a person in this country that doesn't realize how necessary it is to keep our electorate well informed.

So I join the chorus of well-informed listeners tonight to support America's Corporation for Public Broadcasting. I find it ironic that the news got released today, the day when you think of a national day of communication, a day when we tell our loved ones how much we appreciate them through words and symbols. And here we are attacking the very essence of America's foundation for information that is not commercial information, that is not paid for to get it and have to have ratings in order to get people to purchase the commercials.

It is a sad day that Valentine's Day is used to destroy something we love so much. It is mean news to hear some of my Republican colleagues who want to cut almost half a billion dollars out of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting at a time when the world has been dedicated to watching what is going on in the Middle East, in Egypt, which is essentially the essence of communication, the essence of technology, but also the freedom of technology.

In America, we don't own stations, like BBC and Canadian Broadcasting where the government owns the stations. We allow nonprofit entities to do the broadcasting, both on radio and television, as you indicated, Mr. CHANDLER. And I don't think you can raise children in this country without appreciating the value of what is learned, the lessons learned by programs such as Sesame Street and others.

□ 2110

But to think that you can just cut this out as a value to a greater debate of balancing the Federal Government by eliminating this, is nuts. This is what I always call the persons who know the price of everything but the absolute value of nothing. Because cutting this, you can come up with a pricetag, but the value you lose to the American public.

I wake up, here we are in Congress, and obviously we need all the news we

can get. I don't know a Member of Congress who doesn't wake up listening to NPR radio, of all the choices we have, on both sides of the aisle, to get unbiased news in the morning before we come to work. And I know it because when you're on it, people comment the minute you get here. They hear you on NPR, everybody says, I heard you this morning when I was getting ready to come to work. This is not just done by Members of Congress. It's done by everybody in the United States.

And what Congressman BLUMENAUER talked about is the rural parts of America would never have this program; never have access to this information. If you want to destroy rural America, then destroy their access to information. Because then the only thing the young population will do is have to move out in order to keep up. So we have to make sure that these nonsensical cuts, which have dramatic and negative impacts, are not made to this budget. Let's sustain the budget to keep Americans well-informed and ensure future generations of the richness of public broadcasting. Let's give back our hearts and minds to the American public by maintaining PBS.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you for your eloquent statement, your support. And your being with us here this evening is very important. I think your point about how we start the day—how many of us were relying on public broadcasting for up-to-the-minute results of what was going on in Egypt at a time when the large corporate news organizations are cutting back their foreign coverage. Because of the dedication of hundreds of thousands of sponsors, volunteer contributors, public broadcasting has expanded its international coverage extraordinarily so.

But before I turn to my good friend from New York, I would just make one reference, however. Although the international is certainly critical, and it's very important for us here in Congress, one of the things that I think is so essential to zero in on is the local programming for rural and small-town America. Lakeland Public Broadcasting in Bemidji, Minnesota, the only broadcaster—the only broadcaster—for much of their service territory. In Colorado, KBNF is increasingly the point source of news and public affairs programming, emergency preparedness alert, as the print media continues to shrink and corporations kind of move in and automate small radio markets.

I could go on through the list. I won't because I do want to provide time. But there is special coverage in the upper Midwest, in the Northwest, in the Mountain States that is tailored to hard-to-serve areas that no commercial station is willing to invest in this type of quality. And to turn our backs on it is one of the most reckless things that can be done. And, frankly, it's a terrible optic for my Republican friends in their first weeks in power, to turn their backs on 170 million Americans who enjoy and rely on it every month.

In fact, if you look at the survey research about what people want to protect, they want to protect our strength in defense. Number two is public broadcasting. Yet this is on the chopping block.

With that, may I turn to my good friend from Upstate New York (Mr. OWENS).

Mr. OWENS. Thank you very much. I appreciate your leadership on this.

When you talk about rural, I represent rural. Fourteen thousand square miles make up my district, a thousand miles around the perimeter. I live in a very rural place, and public broadcasting is extraordinarily important to each and every one of my constituents.

I have to do a bit of a disclaimer first. My wife works for our local television station. She's the education director. I volunteered at the station for 3½ years, and I was the host of a television program. And I was also the lawyer for that station for about 25 years. So this is a real family affair for me.

I'm most disturbed because I see what's going on in this situation is really a slash-and-burn tactic that is primarily focused on public broadcasting. It is an attempt to take the continuing resolution and make it into a piece of ideology. That's not what our constituents are asking of us. They want us to make an economic decision and do an economic analysis of where we are and where we're going.

I think it's extraordinarily important that we focus on the economics of the debt and the deficit and not on ideology; we have an opportunity to act rationally and in a bipartisan fashion, as we did in the last lame duck session of Congress. Our friends and neighbors at home demand no less. I can agree to cut \$100 billion dollars, which is actually about 3 percent of this year's budget, if we do it by sharing the pain.

Let me tell you a little bit about public broadcasting. My children grew up with it. It is part of the education that my family experienced. My grandchildren are growing up with it. This is the best in family values and quality programming that you're going to see. If our colleagues on the other side of the aisle are concerned about the development of morals, integrity, and education, then public broadcasting is a place they should support, not kill.

Just a few thoughts. My public television station provides essential services to that upstate rural community I talked about. It's aligned with their mission to inform, educate, involve, and entertain. Public broadcasting is America's largest classroom, closing the achievement gap through innovative standards-based educational content and resources for parent, teachers, and students. Public broadcasting serves as a trusted partner and agent of better citizenship in the world's greatest democracy.

Public broadcasting is not a luxury we can't afford but an essential service regularly depended on and enjoyed by 170 million Americans in all 50 States.

Let me repeat that; 170 million Americans support public broadcasting. Cutting or eliminating Federal funding for public broadcasting will have a severe negative impact on local services and economies in all 50 States.

Let me point out that public broadcasting directly supports 21,000 jobs, and almost all of them are in local public radio stations in hundreds of communities in America. Science-focused programming at all age levels, from Sid the Science Kid to NOVA, supports the acquisition of 21st century problem-solving science skills.

I could go on. It's clear that public broadcasting brings a dimension to education that we see in no other modality available to us. I agree that reducing spending is a priority, but it must be achieved without resorting to ideological slash-and-burn tactics that will not allow us to facilitate a compromise with the Senate and White House, which brings real reduction in spending based upon the shared pain, which we all understand is needed. Thank you very much.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you. As only a dedicated volunteer of public broadcasting could come forward with that eloquence and the personal story, I deeply appreciate it.

A couple of facts I think that ought to be on the table. We are talking about less than a half-cent per day per American. We are dealing with organizations that have amazing volunteer support in each and every one of our communities. And they take that half cent a day and they leverage it. Each dollar of Federal funding can leverage \$5, \$6, \$7 of local programming and benefit.

□ 2120

You said something, Congressman OWENS, that I thought was very important when you talked about the programming. In fact, each of you mentioned it. This is the only medium that is geared as programming for our children in order to educate and enrich them, not to sell them something. It's the only area that they have access to.

Mr. FARR. If the gentleman will yield, I think what is also very important is this is one government program where there is no free lunch. It requires a local match. It requires a contribution by the community, by volunteers. It's not a paid-for program without raising the money in the local media, as you know in your own station and had to do every year in the volunteer drive. When you think about it, you don't go out and match public volunteerism to buy military equipment. You don't match with public volunteerism practically any other thing in American society. This is one budget that really depends on the popularity of the programming in order to get volunteer support, volunteer contributions, and volunteer help in the studios.

Why would you cut out something that the private sector and personal commitment think is so important?

Mr. CHANDLER. Boy, does our community volunteer. In all of our communities, I know we see an enormous number of volunteers.

I appreciate what you just said, Mr. FARR from California and Mr. OWENS from New York. Thank you all for your strong support over the years with this and for pointing out the importance of education. I mean, as we all have said, this is the only public entity that educates us on television and radio on a regular basis, and that is an incredibly important thing.

The other thing that is so important about it is it truly broadens our horizons. It doesn't narrow us like so much of what we see on the television. It, rather, broadens our way of thinking. In what other place can you get that on a regular basis in our culture? This is a special American institution.

Mr. FARR. I would even say it defines our civilization. When you think of programs like StoryCorps, collecting that information for the records and keeping that part of our oral history of America, it is absolutely essential that our culture and our times and that our moment in history and in the world be maintained in the public sector where there isn't private ownership of it.

Mr. CHANDLER. It has always had such bipartisan support.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Yes. This is the first time there has been a bipartisan effort, apparently. We've had efforts before. When our Republican friends took over, there were assaults on public broadcasting, but there was ultimately strong bipartisan support that beat it back. At home, these 170 million Americans, they aren't just Democrats or Republicans or Independents. It is a broad spectrum of Americans which relies on information that isn't pre-filtered for them. There are opposing views. We've all heard things on public broadcasting that we don't know we agree with or we've heard things that we never would have listened to in other venues.

I don't want us to close without turning back to our counsel and our volunteer and our spouse of a public broadcasting member.

Mr. OWENS. In my conversations that I've had the opportunity to have over the last couple of days, clearly, public broadcasting understands that they are going to have to share the pain with everyone else. It's one thing to cut somebody's budget by 3 or 4 percent. It's another thing to eliminate somebody's budget. No one survives when somebody's budget is eliminated. People survive and prosper when they have to make up 3 or 4 percent. That's what I'm urging our colleagues on the other side of the aisle to really think about it.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Any other final words?

Mr. FARR. Thank you for your leadership. It is absolutely essential to America's well-being.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. We look forward to continuing this conversation on the floor of the House.

There has been an exciting outpouring of support around the country as people have been invited to look at the facts and to share their opinions. I know that this is making a difference because every Member of Congress is hearing from the men and women they represent about the value of public broadcasting, and if what they are hearing is anything like what is coming into my office, it is overwhelmingly in the support of this vital program and in urging us to do the right thing.

I deeply appreciate my colleagues for joining me this evening. I look forward to continuing to spotlight this and to working to make sure that, rather than eliminate public broadcasting, we work to strengthen it so that everyone in America can benefit.

Thank you very much.

Ms. ESHOO. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this evening to protest the elimination of funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB).

The Republicans are proposing to eliminate CPB's federal funding going forward. Without these funds, local stations would have to reduce or eliminate such valuable public programming as Sesame Street, the NewsHour and NOVA.

Every month, more than 170 million Americans experience the benefits of public broadcasting through 368 public television stations and 934 public radio stations, several of which are located in the Bay Area.

One example is San Francisco's KQED, which attracts more than 841,000 television viewers each week. Employing 275 full-time staff members and providing locally produced news programming, KQED has an important economic and cultural impact on the Bay Area community.

From theater and ballet to music, thoughtful public discourse, science and children's programming, the programming found on public broadcasting has set a world standard.

Public broadcasting is the best definition of educational television—it enriches our sense of the world and educates us.

Over the years, the commercial market strikes another image—reality TV; talking heads shouting past each other; and inane programming. If this is what some viewers want—fine—shouldn't we retain both?

We've done much work together to promote and preserve CPB against those who want to cut it out of the modern world of broadcast technology. These are tough economic times, but what feeds the soul and informs our national intellect should be considered an important national resource.

I urge my colleagues to come together on both sides of the aisle and restore funding to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. I yield back the balance of my time.

THE BUDGET AND WHERE WE GO FROM HERE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. PEARCE. I thank the Speaker and welcome all of you to the discussion tonight.