

Dear Members of Congress:

On behalf of the thousands of local artists and arts organizations we represent, we want to express to you the unique importance of the noncommercial radio sector to the viability and success of American arts and culture and encourage you to strongly support the strengthening of this critical resource.

Our members make up the entire range of American artistic enterprises — music, theater, dance, visual arts, film, and more. While our disciplines, audiences, funding sources and aesthetics all vary, we are united in our reliance on local non-commercial radio to promote, discuss and critique our work. Non-commercial radio — from larger public radio stations to independent community radio to college and high-school outlets — provides an essential and irreplaceable element of local cultural infrastructure.

Non-commercial radio stations provide social and cultural value that their commercial counterparts do not. We value and appreciate commercial radio; in fact we wish there were more commercial stations committed to the traditional values of localism, competition and diversity. But we recognize that, ultimately, the overwhelming majority of today's commercial radio stations exist to deliver specific demographic audiences to advertisers. When it makes business sense for these stations to discuss or promote a local symphony or band, theater performance or new gallery, they do it, and we appreciate it. But these are programming exceptions, not the rule.

By stark contrast, the discussion and promotion of local arts is central to the mission of non-commercial stations, from huge National Public Radio affiliates to tiny low-power FM outlets. Non-commercial radio stations promote their local cultural scenes, provide platforms for review and discussion, and are key supporters and sponsors of cultural events. These stations do this not because it delivers an audience to advertisers but because such programming is central to their missions. It is hard to overestimate the damage that would be done to local arts scenes if these stations were taken off the air.

For many years, arts leaders have called on policy makers to expand and protect this unique resource. It is therefore very troubling to read that some members of Congress believe it is a good idea to reduce or even eliminate funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and National Public Radio. Such an action would have a devastating impact on thousands of local arts organizations and arts supporters that rely on these stations to learn about and discuss upcoming arts events in their communities. If anything, this entire infrastructure warrants increased federal investment, including additional licenses and funding.

We have encouraged some of our constituents to contact you directly to explain how these stations are so integral to the viability of the American cultural marketplace. In the interim, please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Alternate ROOTS

American Federation of Musicians

Americans for the Arts

American Music Center

Association of Performing Arts Presenters

Chorus America

Dance/USA

Fractured Atlas

Future of Music Coalition

League of American Orchestras

National Alliance for Media Arts and Culture

National Alliance for Musical Theatre

National Association of Latino Arts and Culture

National Performance Network

OPERA America

Performing Arts Alliance

Theatre Communications Group