



The second tallest structure in the world, and the tallest in the Americas, is the broadcast tower for KVLY-TV serving Fargo and Grand Forks, North Dakota. It is 2,063 ft high. Photo credit: Flickr/Eric E Johnson via KVLY

Telecommunications

As the United States continues to deploy and adopt 21st century technologies, any federal programs and policies designed to encourage and implement new technologies in Indian Country must contemplate the unique circumstances that exist on tribal lands. Furthermore, without adequate resources and funding, these efforts will not foster tribal self-determination and capacity building. Funding for federal commitments to consult with tribal nations and access to public media systems continue to be essential to bridging the digital divide.

Key Recommendations

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION (FCC)

Financial Services Appropriations Bill

Office of Native Affairs and Policy

- Provide a permanent fixed annual budget of \$500,000 to fund the Office of Native Affairs and Policy.

The FCC's Office of Native Affairs and Policy (FCC-ONAP) was created in 2010. FCC-ONAP is responsible for and actively engaged in new rulemakings aimed at closing the digital divide and providing regulatory oversight in Indian Country. Tribal engagement and consultation efforts developed by FCC-ONAP have generated policies that specifically address the unique telecommunications needs of tribal nations. Further, reforms to key FCC programs, like Lifeline and Link-Up, included unprecedented accommodations to the needs of Indian Country.

During this critical development phase of regulatory proceedings to support 21st century broadband infrastructure, a dedicated annual budget for FCC-ONAP is vital to facilitate meaningful and productive consultations with tribal governments.

FY 2016 ADVANCE APPROPRIATION (CPB/OMB REQUEST) CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING (CPB)

Labor, HHS, Education Appropriations Bill

Grant Programs

- *Appropriate at least \$5 million to fund American Indian and Alaska Native radio stations.*
- *Appropriate at least \$1 million to Native Public Media and Koahnic Broadcast Corporation.*

In Indian Country, Native radio stations are essential to the tribal communities they serve since they are often the first source of emergency reporting and information. Public broadcasters use datacast technology for homeland security, public alert and warning systems, and public safety purposes. In Oklahoma, KCNP Chickasaw radio provided real time weather reports that saved lives during the 2013 tornado season. In Arizona, KUYI Hopi radio provides “House Calls,” a health call-in show that connects listeners with a local doctor on questions about hanta virus, diabetes, HIV, and other local health issues. In Alaska, KNBA covers news from Alaska Native villages about climate change refugees, language revitalization, and other hyper local stories important and relevant to Alaska Native communities. Often, the only place where Native stories and issues are heard is on Native radio stations.

NCAI supports the Administration’s request for a \$445 million advance appropriation for CPB in FY 2016 to be spent in accordance with the Public Broadcasting Act’s funding formula. This is the same budget amount enacted for FY 2014 and requested for FY 2015. Since 1976, CPB’s two-year advance appropriation has served as a Congressional strategy to protect public media from any immediate political pressure. Community Service Grants (CSGs) account for approximately 70 percent of CPB’s appropriation, which directly funds 1,300 local public television and radio stations including the 35 Native radio stations.

Local public media stations and their employees have experienced significant reductions through cuts to other federal programs that benefit public media. The elimination of CPB’s Digital appropriation and the Public Telecommunications Facilities Program coupled with cuts to programs at the Departments of Education and Agriculture represent a \$57.5 million, or 7.3 percent, funding cut between FY 2010 and FY 2012. CPB and the public media system are now facing an additional reduction of over \$22 million through the Budget Control Act’s sequestration process and the recently enacted continuing resolution. These cuts come at a time when stations are struggling to maintain service to their communities in the face of shrinking nonfederal revenues – a \$239 million, or 10.8 percent, drop between FY 2008 and FY 2011.

Native American stations were awarded \$4,474,147 in CPB CSG funds in FY 2013. This is after the approximate five percent reduction in funding due to federal sequestration. The amount of sequestration impact was \$235,000 for the 30 Native radio stations that received CPB funding in FY 2013. Five additional Native stations have since qualified for the CPB CSG program in FY 2013. CPB also funds the essential system-wide station support services provided by Native Public Media, Inc., and content production and satellite programming distribution by Koahnic Broadcast Corporation. Access to these funds allows Native Public Media, Inc., to ensure that Native radio stations stay on the air by maintaining compliance with FCC and other federal rules and regulations, and by providing the training and support Native broadcasters need.

NCAI supports \$5 million in FY 2016 CPB funding for the 35 CPB qualified Native radio stations serving federally recognized American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native Villages; and \$1 million for Native Public Media and Koahnic Broadcast Corporation for technical support services to Native radio stations.