

Testimony
presented to the
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
by
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for nomination to the Board of Directors
Corporation for Public Broadcasting
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Chairman Inouye, Senator Hutchison, and members of this committee, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee and for your consideration of my nomination to serve a second term on the board of the CPB.

My time at CPB has been among the most fulfilling during the years of my involvement in public service – a commitment that has included service on the Boards for International Broadcasting, the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, the President’s Advisory Council of Barnard College, and the Women’s Democracy Network. Since 2002, I have served on the board of CPB, and I was also privileged to be elected by my board colleagues two serve two terms as chair.

I wanted to take this opportunity to talk about my work on the CPB board in particular. As you know, the board is charged with overseeing compliance with the laws and regulations governing the corporation and the use of public broadcasting funds. CPB’s board has extensive oversight over matters related to budgetary controls and governance. We give the CPB staff broad policy guidance, consistent with the directives of the law, but the board has no role in individual program decisions. Shortly after my becoming chairman, the board received the findings and recommendations of CPB’s Office of the Inspector General (OIG), published in November of 2005.

As soon as we received the OIG’s recommendations, we moved to act deliberately and effectively. A comprehensive review of the governance and internal operations of the corporation followed; we call this review Project Champion.

For the first time in CPB’s 40-year history, we initiated a top-to-bottom review of its operations and procedures. Never before had our organization undertaken a major examination of every task, operation and practice to ensure that CPB is following best practices and promoting accountability.

We needed to establish a “tone from the top” based on integrity, ethical values, and clear assignments of authority and responsibility, which are critical to the success of any organization. Thus the board established a Corporate Governance Committee, currently chaired by one of our board members and one of your former colleagues, Senator David Pryor, and an Executive Compensation Committee.

As part of Project Champion, the board also implemented a new code of ethics and a conflict of interest policy for directors; clarified board and CEO roles and responsibilities; committed to transparent actions during board meetings; prevented the use of political tests in employment decisions; adopted a whistleblower policy; adopted new expense guidelines; and committing to a revision of its role in CPB contracting.

I am proud that in my time as chair, we made these significant revisions to our governance procedures, established more clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the board Chair and for the CPB President and CEO, and improved accountability and transparency in the operations of our organization.

In addition, the board, under my tenure as chair and since, has committed to holding more meetings outside of Washington D.C. This allows us to see for ourselves how America's public television and radio stations are in fact serving these local public audiences. There’s an old public broadcasting saying that “when you've seen one public broadcasting station, you’ve seen one public broadcasting station.” My fellow board members’ and my experiences certainly reflect that sentiment. In the past few years we have, individually and as a board, visited stations in Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Florida, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico and West Virginia. Every station we have visited is unique, with its own history, its own challenges, and its own understanding of its place in its community.

We have taken every opportunity to meet with station managers, staff and members of station boards of directors. Through these visits we have been able to see firsthand the role that public broadcasting plays in linking people and their communities with ideas, information and the resources they need in order to address communal concerns and create positive change.

These visits offer us valuable opportunities to connect with public broadcasting where it happens, and to learn from the men and women who work every day to bring to their communities not only the programming, but also the outreach, the online services, and the opportunities for community engagement that set public broadcasting apart.

To give just one example, on our trip to Hawaii, where we visited with you, Mr. Chairman, we learned how the islands that make up the state use public broadcasting for emergency preparedness, for promoting literacy, and for celebrating the state's diverse and special culture.

We are also working to raise public awareness of the excellence in our programming. I am proud to serve the board currently as its Chairman of the Public Awareness Committee, which carries forward this work on an ongoing basis. By reaching out to local station boards, conducting station visits, working to educate opinion leaders and elected representatives, and doing regular outreach, we are making ourselves effective good will ambassadors on behalf of all public broadcasters. We need to continue to engage the larger public audience – not just PBS viewers and NPR listeners – but those who simply do not know about the excellence that exists every day on America's public broadcasting stations. We strive to give voice to a simple message: public broadcasting is "My Source" for quality programming across the entire spectrum of possibility. As I have often said, we need to share our pride in public broadcasting.

All of these efforts bear the imprint and reflect the hard work of a dedicated staff and board. I can say that I have learned much during the course of my service on the CPB board; whether it was in the preparation of the board's response to the OIG's review, the creation of Project Champion, the positive interaction resulting from bringing our meetings to the communities across America or the enthusiasm for the Public Awareness Initiative. My goal as a member of the board has been, and I hope, will continue to be, to responsibly serve as a fiduciary for public broadcasting as mandated by Congress. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for inviting me to testify today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.