Educational Telecommunications Board of Directors

**Executive Director’s Report**

March 25, 2024

**National Update:**

Some good news on the legislative front. The recent budget package passed by Congress includes $535 million for CPB/community service grants and $40 million for the CPB/FEMA station infrastructure grants. This is level funding for CPB and a reduction of $16 million in the CPB/FEMA grant program. The fact that congress continues to have bipartisan support for this important grant program is very good news for rural networks like SDPB.

On the not-so-great news front, I participated in an Organization of State Broadcast Executives (OSBE) meeting earlier this month. Representatives from TRAC media, which provides consultation, audience evaluation and programming services for local public TV stations, presented to our group on downward trends in the TV broadcasting audience. Not surprisingly audiences are moving more and more towards streaming and on demand services for content. And, while the decline in traditional viewership in rural areas has not been as swift or steep as in urban, older audiences have figured out how to use Netflix and Passport. We did have a robust discussion on what we can do as stations, individually and collectively, to address the issues. Needed improvements to PBS Passport were discussed at length. But the biggest discussion points centered around the critical importance of local content audiences cannot find elsewhere. And making that content available to as many audiences as possible with multiple ways to connect. On that front, I think we are ahead of most and need to continue doing what we’re doing.

**Local Update:**

Unfortunately, SDPB/Friends of SDPB were unsuccessful in lobbying the State legislature for increased general funding. While we did have support on the Joint Appropriations Committee, it was not enough to get the republican caucus on board. Internal meetings are underway to work through options for addressing the budget shortfall in FY26.

CPB/FEMA are in the final review stages on our infrastructure grant. We are hopeful to hear our grant award amount for round 1 prior to our board meeting. The legislature did award SDPB roughly $6 million in Federal authority we use to facilitate these grants over the next few years. As a reminder CPB/FEMA were awarded $56 million in both 2022 and 2023 and $40 million in 2024. Presently they are working through awarding station grants from the first $56 million. Subsequent grant rounds will disperse the next $56 million and $40 million respectively. SDPB hopes to receive dollars for much needed infrastructure upgrades in each round.

The new SDPB logo debuted in March. Reaction has been largely positive. Since the steering committee decided on a final look back in November/December, a working group of internal SDPB staff, led by Kara Brodsky, has been meeting, designing, and updating to be ready to launch during the Girls State Basketball Tournament. This has been no small undertaking and I commend the hard work these folks put into making it happen.