**Executive Director’s Report**

**Educational Telecommunications Board**

**October 14, 2021**

***National Update:***

On Thursday, October 7, 2021, the Senate passed a short-term measure to increase the debt ceiling through early December. The House is expected to return to Washington, D.C. and pass the bill on Tuesday, October 12, 2021.

The government is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR), keeping programs, including support for public media, funded at roughly last year’s spending levels through December 3, 2021.

Additional action will be needed to finalize the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 funding bills and extend the debt limit beyond December.

While the Senate Appropriations Committee is unlikely to hold any additional markups this year, the Chairs of each of the subcommittees whose bills have yet to be marked up are reportedly finalizing their versions of the bills, which will serve as a baseline for final negotiations with the House.

As a reminder, the House has already passed its version of the FY 2022 Labor Health & Human Services, Education and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, with $565 million for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (a $90 million increase), $20 million for Interconnection (level funding that matches our request) and $31.78 million for Ready To Learn (a $2.28 million increase). In addition, the FY 2022 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, which was reported out of the House Appropriations Committee, contained our request of $20 million for public media station infrastructure related to public safety services through the new Next Generation Warning System. On Saturday, October 2, 2021, the President signed into law a 30-day extension of federal surface transportation programs after the House of Representatives failed to advance the bipartisan infrastructure package.

Democratic leadership in both the House and the Senate have designated October 31, 2021 as the new target deadline to pass both the bipartisan infrastructure package and the $3.5 trillion reconciliation package, which would fund a broad range of the President’s priorities.

It remains uncertain whether the different factions within the Democratic party can reach a deal on both measures.

Significant changes — including a substantial reduction in the overall cost of the reconciliation bill — are expected to be made to the House draft to garner the support of more moderate Democratic Senators.

Additionally, adjustments will be necessary to comply with the complex limitations on what can be included, subject to advisory rulings by the Senate parliamentarian.

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee included $24 million for public broadcasting public safety infrastructure in its portion of the reconciliation bill

The program would be administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

There are reports that this funding is likely to be included in the Senate Committee on Homeland and Government Affairs’ section of the reconciliation package, which has yet to be released.

While the inclusion of this funding for station infrastructure related to alert and warning is a very positive development, we are still a long way from our goal of final congressional passage.

Both the base budget increase of $90M for CPB and the possibility of infrastructure grant programs being reinstated are huge for SDPB going forward. It could mean significant additional dollars for local content and educational services along with reducing the burden on the State to fully fund infrastructure upgrade needs.

***Local Update:***

SDPB/BIT has submitted its FY23 budget request to the Bureau of Finance & Management and the Governor’s office. It is one of the largest budget requests SDPB has ever put forward – over $30M in one-time funds to replace aging infrastructure throughout the state. As of writing this, I do not have further information on when we will know what, if anything, the Governor will be recommending in her FY23 budget.

SDPB’s FY22 budget is on track. We are still in possession of most of our CARES funding. The intent was to use some of those dollars to purchase the broadcast tower for Watertown FM. Unfortunately, the current owners decided to not sell at the last minute. We are redirecting some of those dollars to other projects.

Thank you to Board members for completing the CPB harassment and bias prevention training. It is a requirement for our yearly grant from the Corporation. Now that we are signed up, we will be able to complete this requirement much earlier in the grant process for next year.

SDPB’s content teams continue to produce great work! Cara and her Journalism team won 2 National Edward R Murrow awards and Brad and his Entertainment team are nominated for a Regional Emmy. Congratulations to them both!