Educational Telecommunications Board of Directors

**Executive Director’s Report**

August 7, 2024

**National Update:**

As of this report, the Senate Appropriations Committee considered and approved the fiscal year (FY) 2025 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education (Labor-HHS-Education) Appropriations Bill. The bill provided level funding of $535 million for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) two-year advance in FY 2027, $60 million for public broadcasting interconnection and $31 million for Ready To Learn. These strong funding levels in a bill that passed with exceptional bipartisan support strengthen our position for the negotiations on the final bills after the November election.  While the House Labor-HHS-Education bill, which would eliminate CPB and interconnection funding, remains deeply concerning, there is still a long way to go before the FY 2025 funding levels are finalized.

We have received initial notice from CPB regarding our FEMA infrastructure grant request. The good news is we expect to receive a sizeable part of our grant in the first round. We are expecting contracts to arrive shortly. Once we know the actual award, we will be applying for the unfunded remainder in round two which opens for applications in September. More on this in Severn Ashes Engineering report.

**Local Update:**

It has been an incredibly busy spring and summer at SDPB. From wrapping up high school sporting and fine arts events to planning, shooting and editing for this fall’s new seasons of Dakota Life, SD Focus, to special election programming and a number of outreach events, SDPB has been traveling all around the state.

Budgeting for FY26 is underway. SDPB is requesting state funding support for several engineering and operations projects. We are seeking to replace our aging encoders in the capital complex that support open government by streaming and recording legislative hearings, boards and commission meetings and other gatherings of state governments. Additionally, we are seeking on-going funding to add voice to text features of all meetings to meeting upcoming ADA requirements. Total project cost is roughly $120,000.

SDPB is also partnering with State Radio in a larger ask to add key card access and security camera monitoring of all our major tower sites across the state. The total project cost is around $750,000 for both State Radio and SDPB.

Marcy Drew and her team have developed some amazing educational resources around Tatanka, A Way of Life. PBS LearningMedia is excited to add them to their library of resources for teachers. We think this will be a great resource for our South Dakota teachers and especially our tribal school educators. The Tatanka resource has been published on PBS LearningMedia - <https://sdpb.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/buffalo-past-and-present-lesson-plan/tatanka-a-way-of-life>.

We have had several staff departures since our last board meeting. One retirement in field engineering – Mark Bremmon. Mark serviced the northeast part of the state. We plan to replace this position. Digital Strategies Manager, Heather Benson announced her resignation in June and Associate Producer for SD Focus, Krystal Schoenbauer just announced her resignation this week. We hope to fill the Digital Strategies Manager by late September and are working through opening Krystal’s position within the next few weeks.