

*CBS Mornings Plus*

07/22/25

9:18:40 a.m. [TEASE]

9 seconds

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Ahead; Public Media Funding Cuts]

ADRIANA DIAZ: Coming up, we are going inside the Trump administration's deep funding cuts to public media organizations like PBS and NPR, how it could impact you at home. That's today's, by the way.

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9:22:21 a.m.

6 minutes and 2 seconds

DIAZ: Public media stations are bracing for the impact of Congress's decision to slash more than \$1 billion in federal funding. Last week, the Republican-led House approved the cuts for the corporation for public broadcasting, ending all federal support for NPR, PBS, and local member stations. By the way, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting has been around since 1967. Yep, that's when television stations still broadcast in black and white. It's helped fund more than 1500 local public radio and TV outlets across the country. President Trump said a key reason for the — for the — for the budget cut was because he — he says PBS and NPR are politically biased, but public media executives say some of the hardest hit stations will be radio outlets that provide critical news and information to rural communities. We're joined now by Dina PolkinghornE, interim general manager at KZYX, a community and public radio station in Mendocino County, California. It's a coastal community in the northern part of the state that serves more than 90,000 people. Dina, good morning.

DINA POLKINGHORNE: Good morning.

DIAZ: So, walk us through how this budget cut affects your station. In particular, how much will you lose in terms of dollars and what will be the impact?

[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: By the Way; The Impact of Public Media Funding Cuts]

POLKINGHORNE: So, for KZYX, this represents about 25 percent of our annual operating revenue just evaporated overnight. For — for our station, we have a staff of five, about five people. I'm the interim general manager. I'll be exiting soon, so five people and we had to lay off our news director. You know, at the small rural stations we don't have like a news team, a news department made up of multiple people. It was one person and we had to lay that news director off.

TONY DOKOUPIL: And what kind of services does your station provide to listeners?

POLKINGHORNE: You know, a whole — a whole variety of things. You know, on — in — in good times, we have a show called *Trading Time* where people can call in and say, I've got some extra wood from my deck project. I'd like to trade with somebody for, you know, a new nail gun, but in bad times, and, you know, this is an area prone to natural disasters. We provide a lot of emergency information, breaking news. We, you know, we — we're a small community. We don't have a lot of big donors on speed dial, but we have the sheriff on speed dial, and we have the, you know, the local office of emergency services personnel on speed dial. It's a large county divided north to south with a mountain range on one side. It's very dry and prone to wildfires. And on the other side, we just some pretty, pretty violent winter storms, sometimes with lots of redwoods in between that fall across the road, so our listeners need to know what roads are open, you know what — what areas are flooded, things like that.

DIAZ: And what do you say to President Trump's view that public broadcasting stations are politically biased?

POLKINGHORNE: Oh, goodness. We are so far removed from the hyper political things happening in D.C. You know, we — we don't ask people what party they belong to when we're interviewing them about a local measure. It's just — the boots on the ground folks just do not care. They're not interested in that on a local level. You know, we provide an opportunity for people running for local office to come on our airwaves and let the listeners know why they should have their vote and we don't ask them what political party they belong to. It's just so far removed from all of that.

DOKOUPIL: From the sounds of it, your station and other small stations like yourself are being hurt by cuts that happen because of a fight going on at a higher level. And I'm curious. I mean, are you upset? And if so, who do you direct that anger at? Is it at the administration or is it at the NPRs of the world which, you know, the President's point, there's some data supporting the idea that they're mostly Democrats working there, and the coverage hasn't been down the middle?

POLKINGHORNE: You know, I honestly don't have time. I don't have time to think about that. I mean, we — we our fiscal year started July 1. We had to prepare for these cuts. We passed a break even budget and the only way we get there is by, like I said, laying off the staff person, some other cuts and some really ambitious fundraising goals. You know, I'm concerned, you know, how many times we can go back to the well, to our listeners to make up that gap for us? It's \$174,000, which is a tiny, I think — what is it — like, 0.005? And this comes to us through and this is what I hope people take away from this is, you know, if we don't want to burden the taxpayers with paying for NPR, that's one thing. But a — a provision in this rescission effort included something called the community services grant, which many of these small rural stations receive. It's a tiny amount of money in the grand scheme of things, but a huge part of our operational budgets across the country in red districts, blue districts, you know, we all have emergencies in rural areas. We all have to provide this. You know, critical information to people. And I just — I just can't get involved in any of that. It's — we've got work to do here on the ground to keep our listeners safe and informed.

DOKOUPIL: I can understand that completely.

DIAZ: Yeah.

DOKOUPIL: Dina — Dina — Dina Polkinghorn, the real cost of — of a fight that's many thousands of miles away from — from where you are. And the — the trade in show sounds amazing. I have some stuff I want to call in. If I get something for an old IKEA bed.

DIAZ: Thank you, Dina.

DOKOUPIL: Thank you very much. We appreciate it. That was today's, by the way.