

WKU public media seek support after sudden \$2.5 million federal funding cut

bgdailynews.com/2025/07/29/wku-public-media-seek-support-after-sudden-2-5-million-federal-funding-cut

David Horowitz

July 29, 2025



WKU Public Media students work alongside staff to produce an episode featuring the Americana act "Goldpine" for Lost River Sessions. (SUBMITTED BY WKU Public Media)

DAVID MAMARIL HOROWITZ

david.horowitz@bgdailynews.com

Congress' \$1.1 billion cut in Corporation of Public Broadcasting funding leaves WKU Public Radio and WKU PBS just over two months to acquire immediate funding to keep five of their 20 full-time positions.

Funding for the five is among \$2.5 million in eliminated funding that was intended to go to parent nonprofit WKU Public Media — and its stations' coverage areas statewide — over the next two years, more than \$1.2 million annually, said Jordan Basham, the nonprofit's interim executive director of public media services.

And, through Sept. 30, 2026, WKU Public Media will need funding to be able to compensate for an additional five full-time positions — for a total of 10 full-time jobs — as well as 40 paid student, part-time positions that have performed all roles across the stations, Basham said.

The positions are at greatest risk through that period as the agency works to adapt, Basham said.

The cuts will impact all areas of operations, Basham said.

The pot of money — a third of the stations' funding — was approved by Congress two years ago, Basham said. The plan had been to receive it Oct. 1, so that's when impacts are anticipated to begin, he said.

“Both parties came together in a bipartisan moment, said, ‘This is important for the country,’ and wanted to move forward — ‘and if for whatever reason, we decide that's not the case anymore, we're at least going to give them two years to figure something out,’” WKU PBS Production Manager Josh Niedwick said. “The way this was done, it was like a thief in the night.”

The House's July 17 passage of the Rescissions Act of 2025 removed this funding for CPB, which describes itself as “the federal government's investment in public broadcasting and the largest single source of funding for public radio, television and related online and mobile services.” The public media stations provide hands-on, on-the-ground training to student journalists while providing widely accessible news across the commonwealth.

“(Our purpose is) to educate, it's to enlighten, it's to empower. And it becomes this cycle where when we educate, and we enlighten and we empower people ... they go on to continue to do that in other ways,” Niedwick said.

“To consider that that is going to be probably vastly diminished — and let's face it, the rural stations are the ones most at risk — is something that is both incredibly frustrating and unnecessary.

“Words fail, to be honest.”

Eliminated from WKU Public Radio are a community service grant and rural support grant that provide \$258,000.

On the television side, the cuts remove an \$813,000 community service grant, an interconnection grant worth about \$13,000 and a \$138,000 universal support grant, which aims at supporting rural broadcasts.

Basham and Niedwick recalled a screening of the WKU PBS production “By Parties Unknown” — about the lynching of four Black men in Russellville — held at a Logan County church with the victims’ descendants.

“That project was a whole lot of work to tell the right way,” Basham said.

WKU Public Media is working on a community matching fund of \$100,000 to support a \$100,000 initial donation drive with matched pledges. Last weekend, it acquired the first \$50,000 from 80 donors, including 21 who are new.

“This is huge for us,” said Basham, adding that the weekend gain was about 10% of the new donors over the last year. “To get 10% of that is illustrating how highly our community is valuing the services we provide.”

It’ll be part of a \$500,000 goal in emergency pledges that, while they wouldn’t fill the entire budget gap, would help bridge it as the nonprofit figures out how to restructure to become sustainable, Jordan said.

Donations can be made via <https://www.wkyufm.org/support-us>

Horowitz reports for the Daily News via a partnership with Report for America.

[Print Article](#)