

September 14, 2005

Ms. Patricia de Stacy Harrison  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Corporation for Public Broadcasting  
401 Ninth Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20004-2129

Dear Ms. Harrison:

As you are aware, we believe openness and public accountability at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting are critical to the health and success of public broadcasting. To that end, we were troubled by your August 18 letter dismissing our recommendations for increased transparency at the CPB, particularly for certain board activities concerning the allocation of taxpayer funds.

You wrote that the CPB has “*statutory obligations that ensure transparency and openness, and [has] developed other mechanisms throughout [its] business and other internal processes that also reflect this commitment,*” and that our concerns “*are addressed by current practice and policy.*”

However, we have reviewed the CPB website, bylaws, reports by the Office of the Inspector General and the Public Broadcasting Act closely, and found no policies governing:

- what types of business are conducted in executive session, behind closed doors, as opposed to in open, public meetings
- the disclosure of board agenda items, minutes from board meetings and background documents used for decision-making
- the allocation of speaking time for members of the public

If the CPB has written policies in place governing these matters, we strongly encourage you to make them publicly available on your website. In addition, we question your assertion that meetings of the CPB board are truly open to the public. It has been our experience that only a small portion of the board meetings are open to the public. Most of the substantive work of the board seems to take place either in closed committee meetings or in Executive Session. Given the fact that CPB allocates public dollars, surely it is reasonable that the board make an effort to conduct most of its deliberations in the open, for all the public to see.

Surely, it would have benefited CPB and the public if we better understood how the board reached its decision to spend federal dollars to hire two ombudsmen to review balance in public broadcasting programs, or to know the rest of the board’s reactions to Chairman Tomlinson’s concerns about bias in certain PBS programs such as “Now with Bill Moyers.”

We regret that you do not have the time to meet with us before the September 27 CPB Board meeting, and have stated that it is not possible for us to meet with members of the board individually.

We will continue to urge you and members of the CPB board to consider and vote on at your next meeting the following policy reforms to ensure that:

- Contracts approved by the CPB board have the support of a majority of the board, and the awareness of the entire board
- Public broadcasting organizations (such as PBS or NPR) are informed of any plans by CPB to undertake studies or reports on their programming.
- CPB meetings are made available to the public via real-time online, video, audio and other communications, and are made available for later public viewing via online and archived files.
- Members of the public have the opportunity to speak at open meetings, within reasonable limits of schedule.
- Conflict-of-interest statements filed by board members are made available via online and archived files.

We urge you to place these matters on the agenda for the September 27 board meeting so that they can become part of the public debate. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

**Chellie Pingree**  
President  
Common Cause

Executive Director  
Citizens for Independent Public  
Broadcasting

**Josh Silver**  
Executive Director  
Free Press

**Sean McLaughlin**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Hawaii Consumers

**Jeff Chester**  
Executive Director  
Center for Digital Democracy

**Lisa Fager**  
President  
Industry Ears

**Charles Benton**  
Chairman  
Benton Foundation

**Jeff Perlstein**  
Executive Director  
Media Alliance

**Jonathan Rintels**  
Executive Director  
Center for Creative Voices in Media

**Jonathan Lawson**  
Executive Director  
Reclaim the Media

**Scott Sanders**  
Chicago Media Action

**Mona Mangan**  
Executive Director  
Writers Guild of America, East

**Jerry Starr**