



**Media Minutes**  
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**Producers: Stevie Converse and Candace Clement**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **New Journalism Centers Created for Public Media**

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting has announced a major journalism initiative that will increase original local reporting in seven regions around the country.

The CPB is funding the creation of seven Local Journalism Centers that would combine the resources of participating public TV and radio stations to tackle important but under-reported regional news stories.

Patricia Harrison, President and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, says that the public media system is uniquely structured to increase regional reporting.

**Pat Harrison:** *Our mission is to take that 30,000-foot view of how public media, television and radio and now online, how are they meeting the need in this, in any changing environment. And it's obvious that journalism is going through a big change, and we saw a need to fill – a need that was specifically fillable, given our mission and our commitment over the last 40 years to both education and journalism.*

The Centers will be comprised of three to seven public media stations in specific geographic areas. They will hire teams of multimedia journalists and editors who will work with station news directors. The teams will decide on a single issue of concern for their region. Their reports will be distributed across radio, TV and the Web. Individual stations will also conduct community engagement programs.

The CPB will initially fund five local journalism centers in the coming months in the Southwest, the Plains states, upstate New York, the Upper Mid-West, and Central Florida. Two more will be added in the coming months – one in the South and one in the Northwest.

Harrison says that the centers – which will initially focus on issues like upstate New York's agriculture economy, healthcare issues in Central Florida, and immigration in the Southwest — will bring diversity and depth to regional reporting that has been missing in news reporting. She describes the immigration reporting project:

**Pat Harrison:** *They're going to hire a bilingual reporting team to look at what they're calling, "The Changing America Desk," and look at some of the issues, such as immigration and border issues that are impacting that region. But without having that bilingual, sort of extra added value, you could miss some really great interviews. We're really going to have a 360-degree approach to this issue. So that ranges from Phoenix to San Diego, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Arizona. And while they have done stories on this issue – all of these stations – this really pumps it up.*

The total CPB and station investment over two years is approximately \$10.5 million, with an expectation that each Center will become self-sustaining by the end of the two-year funding period.

For more information on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's new Local Journalism Centers initiative, go to [cpb.org](http://cpb.org).

And now a commentary by Megan Tady:

### **Comcast and NBC's Real Diversity Issues**

At last month's House hearing on Comcast's proposed takeover of NBC, executives from both companies shamefully acknowledged their diversity problems. Comcast CEO Brian Roberts divulged that his company's board of directors includes only one woman and one person of color, and NBC's Jeff Zucker confessed that the network has no Black programming.

Seeing Roberts and Zucker sweat under heavy fire from Congress got us wondering: What else should we be asking about these companies' woeful commitment to diversity?

Media mergers have proven bad for local and diverse programming, and have resulted in fewer women and fewer people of color owning media outlets. When NBC bought Spanish language network Telemundo in 2001, it pledged more local news. But a few years after the merger was approved, NBC created cheap regional newscasts that phoned-in canned coverage, with an insert or two of actual local news. Nine years later, we should ask, will this happen again? How do we ensure that news coverage serving communities of color won't be further cut? How can we ensure that it improves?

Another question: Why are Comcast's commitments regarding Telemundo so pathetic? As part of its voluntary merger concessions, the company has promised to add Telemundo programming to Comcast's on-demand library — but that merely involves moving Telemundo re-runs to a cable platform. That's a good way to generate new (and expensive) cable subscriptions, but it does nothing to enhance broadcast localism or program diversity for the underserved Spanish language market.

One thing we cannot do is accept these companies' promises that they'll "do better." That's just lip service to win merger approval. We need to ask for remedies that will change the structural status quo in ways that benefit people of color and women as

entrepreneurs, owners, media professionals, and audiences and consumers. In other words, getting NBC to feature more people of color as guests on its news programs is a step in the right direction, but it is not as effective as getting the company to commit to providing more hours of local Spanish language news, or requiring Comcast to carry an independent cable channel that's owned by a person of color.

If we want a system that gives us local news, diverse programming for diverse audiences and minority media ownership, we have to change media ownership in this country – and it can begin with refusing to let Comcast and NBC merge.

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