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Corporation for Public Broadcasting to close After nearly 6 decades

How are Detroit PBS, WRCJ affected?

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The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) board has voted to dissolve the organization after 58 years.

- This decision follows the elimination of all federal funding for the CPB by Congress.
- CPB leadership stated the move was necessary to protect the public media system from political attacks.
- Local stations, like Detroit PBS, are relying on increased community support to offset the loss of federal funds.

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), the nonprofit entity established by Congress to manage federal investments in public broadcasting, announced this week that its board has voted to dissolve the organization after 58 years of service.

The move comes in the wake of Congress eliminating all federal funding for CPB, following prolonged political pressure from the Trump administration that leaders say left the corporation unable to fulfill its mission under the Public Broadcasting Act.

Despite the national impact, Detroit's public television and radio stations remain determined to press forward with operations.

“For more than half a century, CPB existed to ensure that all Americans — regardless of geography, income, or background — had access to trusted news, educational programming, and local storytelling,” said Patricia Harrison, president and CEO of CPB.

“When the administration and Congress rescinded federal funding, our board faced a profound responsibility: CPB’s final act would be to protect the integrity of the public

media system and the democratic values by dissolving, rather than allowing the organization to remain defunded and vulnerable to additional attacks.”

CPB board chair Ruby Calvert called the current state of public media “devastating.”

“After nearly six decades of innovative, educational public television and radio service, Congress eliminated all funding for CPB, leaving the Board with no way to continue the organization or support the public media system that depends on it,” she said. “Yet, even in this moment, I am convinced that public media will survive, and that a new Congress will address public media’s role in our country because it is critical to our children’s education, our history, culture and democracy to do so.”

CPB’s legacy and closure plans

Created under the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting played a pivotal role in building a nationwide network of more than 1,500 locally owned public radio and television stations. Over nearly six decades, CPB helped make public media a trusted civic institution — bringing educational programs like “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood” and “Sesame Street” to generations of children, delivering emergency alerts during disasters, and funding fact-based journalism that informs communities and strengthens civic engagement.

The board said it could not justify keeping CPB as a defunded, inactive entity, warning that doing so could expose the organization to political interference and legal risks. Instead, CPB will wind down operations in an “orderly closure,” distributing remaining funds as directed by Congress. The corporation will also support the American Archive of Public Broadcasting in preserving historic content and ensure its own archives, dating to 1967, are safeguarded in partnership with the University of Maryland for public access.

While CPB’s chapter closes, local stations, producers, and journalists will continue the mission of public media —serving communities, informing the public, and amplifying local voices.

“Public media remains essential to a healthy democracy,” Harrison said. “Our hope is that future leaders and generations will recognize its value, defend its independence, and continue the work of ensuring that trustworthy, educational, and community-centered media remains accessible to all Americans.”

The local effect

While the loss of CPB funding set Detroit PBS back by almost \$3 million annually and radio station WRCJ by nearly \$173,000, Detroit PBS and WRCJ President and CEO Rich Homberg said the regional community has largely stepped in to fill that gap. The two organizations combined are up by about 11,000 members compared to last year, for a total of nearly 80,000 active financial supporters.

“2025 tested us in ways we never expected,” Homberg wrote in an email to members. “The loss of federal funding forced difficult decisions, but we faced them directly and stayed focused on serving Southeast Michigan with integrity and purpose.

“What carried us through was you. Members, viewers, donors, partners, and staff stepped up when it mattered most. Because of your support, trusted journalism continues. Educational resources remain available to families and teachers. Local storytelling and cultural programming stayed strong when our community needed it most.”

He said that, while it’s not surprising that the CPB made the decision to close its doors given the circumstances and political climate, and the challenges ahead are real and ongoing, he feels public media in Detroit still has a bright future.

“In 2026,” he wrote, “we’re doing more than recovering – we’re building the model for the future. That includes deeper investment in education and literacy, expanded support for caregivers, and powerful storytelling through Destination Detroit as we approach America’s 250th anniversary. It also includes major national and local programs such as ‘Black and Jewish America: An Interwoven History’ with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., alongside continued coverage focused on Michigan’s future.

“We’re also moving forward with our new home in Detroit’s Milwaukee Junction, designed to better serve, connect, and reflect the community we exist to support.”