

Thank you to our witnesses who are before us today to testify on National Public Radio, NPR. I do have to note for the record that we invited NPR's CEO, Katherine Maher (MAR) who declined to appear today to discuss NPR's alleged past efforts to pressure conservative and moderate voices into silence. Hopefully, we can work out a time for her to appear and testify before this Committee in the near future.

The only reason not to appear in front of the Committee, at some point in the near future is if the allegations are both true and NPR doesn't care.

Last month, longtime NPR business editor, Uri (YUR-e) Berliner, wrote an article published by conservative news website, The Free Press, accusing his then-employer of having a QUOTE absence of viewpoint diversity END QUOTE¹

Berliner criticized NPR for not reflecting the viewpoints of all Americans. Instead, Berliner wrote, NPR is QUOTE the distilled worldview of a very small segment of the U.S. population, END QUOTE meaning the people clustered around coastal cities and college towns.²

It was alleged that, in recent years, NPR's extremely progressive viewpoints are evident in its coverage of major news stories.

For example, just a couple of days ago, in an article on a recent bill regarding Tik Tok and foreign owned social media, the author claimed that Congress had no QUOTE "...direct evidence" END QUOTE that Tik Tok was a threat. That's simply not true.

¹Uri Berliner, *I've Been at NPR for 25 Years. Here's How We Lost America's Trust.*, Free Press (April 9, 2024), <https://www.thefp.com/p/npr-editor-how-npr-lost-americas-trust>.

² *Id.*

If NPR had listened openly and fairly to comments Tik Tok's own CEO made before this Committee last year, they would know there was no real firewall between the Chinese Communist Party and the American company.

They also fail to mention the 3-hour security briefing before the Committee took up the bill.

That type of biased viewpoint affects the way I look at NPR's coverage of ongoing antisemitic riots at universities across the country.

NPR's coverage of these chaotic protests has been borderline encouraging, nostalgic even, evoking the good old days of protesting Vietnam.³

NPR reporters have dismissed evidence suggesting external groups have had a role in coordinating these protests, despite contrary reporting by outlets like the *Wall Street Journal*⁴

As far back as 2005, NPR editors were aware of and trying to address a question that was bothering listeners: *how truly national is NPR?*⁵

For those in rural communities and in smaller towns, like the folks I represent, nationally produced NPR news programs are not relevant and not of interest.

³ Rachel Treisman, *She Survived the 1970 Kent State Shooting. Here's Her Message to Student Activists*, NPR (May 4, 2024), <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/04/1249023924/kent-state-shooting-activists-protests-survivor>. See also Willem Marx, *Campus Protests Over the War in Gaza have Gone International*, NPR (May 3, 2024), <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/03/1248661834/student-protests-gaza-universities-international>. Rachel Treisman, *How Some Faculty Members are Defending Student Protesters, in Actions and in Words*, NPR (May 1, 2024), <https://www.npr.org/2024/05/01/1248099600/campus-protests-faculty-arrests-letters-no-confidence-votes>.

⁴ Tawnell D. Hobbs et al., *Activist Groups Trained Students for Months Before Campus Protests*, Wall St. J. (May 3, 2024), https://www.wsj.com/us-news/education/student-campus-protests-veteran-activist-groups-17ccd094?mod=djem10point#comments_sector.

⁵ Jeffrey A. Dvorkin, *How 'National' Is NPR?*, NPR (Sept. 27, 2005), <https://www.npr.org/sections/publiceditor/2005/09/27/4865936/how-national-is-npr>.

Nationally produced NPR news programs often simply do not broadcast content that reflects their values, and culture.

As a result of adopting a mostly progressive framing in so much of its reporting, NPR is losing its audience.

At its peak in 2017, NPR had over 30 million weekly listeners. By 2022, NPR had lost 6.6 million weekly listeners.⁶

As a result, NPR has had a substantial budget deficits and layoffs including 10 percent of its staff.⁷

What was intended to be a media organization that brought together millions of Americans across geographic, socio-economic, and ideological boundaries to discuss life, the arts, and culture, has turned into what appears to be a progressive propaganda purveyor. Using our taxpayer dollars, no less.

Now, to be clear, the local public radio station affiliates are not what I am talking about. I would make the distinction that they often have more responsive programming and local public interest and civic stories.

I have generally thought that the local public radio stations in my part of Virginia mostly provide a public service and in many cases are useful in helping to preserve local heritage.

⁶ Pew Research Center, Public Broadcasting Fact Sheet: Weekly Broadcast Audience (Aug. 1, 2023), <https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/fact-sheet/public-broadcasting/>.

⁷ McKenna Oxenden, *NPR Cuts 10% of Staff and Halts Production of 4 Podcasts*, N.Y. Times (Mar. 25, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/25/us/npr-layoffs-podcasts.html>;

NPR claims federal spending accounts for less than one percent of its annual operating budget.⁸ Although NPR receives one percent in direct federal grants, local radio stations may use any portion of their federal grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, to pay NPR's membership dues and programming fees. That figure is roughly 30 percent of NPR's revenue.⁹

This hearing is a chance for us to take stock of whether we should be using federal taxpayer dollars to promote one ideology to the exclusion of others.

If NPR wants to create a one-sided ideological content that marginalizes a substantial portion of Americans, they can fight it out with all the other media companies for market share and pay for it on their own dime.

I would prefer NPR to return to its original mission under the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, to provide objectivity and balance in coverage of controversial subjects.

To me that means representing many different opinions in its newsgathering.

I want to thank our witnesses again and look forward to hearing your testimony.

⁸ Public Radio Finances, NPR, <https://www.npr.org/about-npr/178660742/public-radio-finances> (last accessed May 4, 2024).

⁹ Public Radio and the Role of Federal Funding, GAO-11-669R, Gov't Accountability Office (May 19, 2011), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-11-669r#:~:text=The%20Corporation%20for%20Public%20Broadcasting,accordance%20with%20a%20statutory%20formula.>