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NEWS

U. S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER

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PUBLIC BROADCASTING REFORMS

REAL REFORMS ENACTED IN SENATE DEBATE; ARE SOME REPORTERS AFRAID OF THE COOKIE MONSTER?

YESTERDAY THE SENATE VOTED TO REAUTHORIZE THE CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING FOR FISCAL YEARS 1994, 1995 AND 1996 AT A COST OF \$1.1 BILLION. BY A VOTE OF 84 TO 11, THE SENATE APPROVED THIS 50% INCREASE IN FUNDING, A FIGURE FAR ABOVE THE MORE REASONABLE, BUT STILL GENEROUS \$825 MILLION RECOMMENDED BY THE PRESIDENT.

BUT BEFORE ANYONE MISREADS THE VOTE, OR BEGINS THE CELEBRATION ANEW, LET'S BE CLEAR THAT SOME SIGNIFICANT REFORMS HAVE BEEN ENACTED, EVEN IF THE SENATE ONCE AGAIN MISSED AN OPPORTUNITY TO CUT SPENDING -- LOOKS LIKE ALL THE TALK LATELY ABOUT THE DEFICIT CRISIS AND A BALANCED BUDGET AMENDMENT IS JUST A LOT OF "HAPPY TALK": NO WONDER PEOPLE CAN'T STAND CONGRESS.

MEDIA SHORTCHANGED TAXPAYERS

THE TAXPAYERS ALSO GOT SHORTCHANGED BY SOME OF THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING ISSUE BECAUSE A FEW REPORTERS -- CALL THEM CHEERLEADERS -- WERE UNABLE TO GET BEYOND SILLY AND SHALLOW CHARACTERIZATIONS OF THIS ISSUE: CONSERVATIVES WERE OUT TO STARVE THE COOKIE MONSTER, THEY WISECRACKED.

BUT DESPITE SOME OF OUR EFFORTS TO ARTICULATE MANY OF THE VERY REAL PROBLEMS WITHIN THE SYSTEM -- MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR PROBLEMS BORDERING ON OUTRIGHT SCANDAL -- SOME REPORTERS SIMPLY TURNED ON THE CENSORSHIP MACHINE AND MADE IT ALL GO AWAY.

WELL, WE HAVE NOW PUT THE FACTS IN THE RECORD. THE LEADS ARE THERE. THE INFORMATION IS THERE. LET'S HOPE SOMEONE HAS THE COURAGE TO PURSUE IT ALL...UNLESS THEY ARE TRULY AFRAID OF THE COOKIE MONSTER.

THE GOOD NEWS IS, TWO LONG-OVERDUE REFORMS ARE INCLUDED IN THE BILL THAT PASSED YESTERDAY AND I URGE THE CPB BOARD TO USE THESE NEW TOOLS TO HELP GIVE THE TAXPAYERS THE BROADCASTING SYSTEM THEY DESERVE.

REFORM #1: BALANCE

THE FIRST REFORM IS WHAT HAS BEEN CALLED THE "BALANCE" AMENDMENT, WHICH I SPONSORED ALONG WITH TWO STRONG PROPONENTS OF PUBLIC BROADCASTING, SENATORS DAN INOUE OF HAWAII, AND TED STEVENS OF ALASKA. OUR AMENDMENT REQUIRES ADHERENCE TO A REQUIREMENT THAT HAS BEEN LONG IGNORED BY TAXPAYER FINANCED BROADCASTING -- PROGRAMMING WHICH CONTAINS CONTROVERSIAL MATERIAL MUST BE OBJECTIVE AND BALANCED.

THIS REQUIREMENT HAS BEEN IN PLACE SINCE 1967, THE YEAR CONGRESS CREATED "EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION." UNFORTUNATELY, PUBLIC BROADCASTING HAS CHOSEN TO IGNORE THIS REQUIREMENT, AND HAS ENERGETICALLY FUNNELLED MILLIONS AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS INTO LEFTWING, AMERICAN-BASHING DOCUMENTARIES, GLOOMY ONE-SIDED REPORTS ON "WHAT'S WRONG WITH AMERICA", AND ALL KINDS OF OTHER MISCHIEF.

THE AMENDMENT ADOPTED BY THE SENATE SHOULD CHANGE THAT IMBALANCE BY MANDATING A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW BY THE BOARD.

IT ALSO REQUIRES THE BOARD TO ESTABLISH A NEW SYSTEM TO FIELD COMPLAINTS BY THE THOSE WHO ARE PAYING THE BILLS -- THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER. AFTER ALL, SHOULDN'T THEY HAVE THE FINAL WORD WHEN IT COMES TO PROGRAMMING AND QUALITY AND NOT SOME SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP?

FINALLY, IT REQUIRES THE BOARD TO TAKE ACTION WHEN THE OBJECTIVITY AND BALANCE STANDARD IS VIOLATED, INCLUDING THE WITHHOLDING OF FUNDS FROM OFFENDING ORGANIZATIONS.

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