

Testimony on HB 1015
House Appropriations Committee
Government Operations Division
John Harris, President & CEO
Prairie Public Broadcasting
January 16, 2025

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the budget request for Prairie Public Broadcasting, North Dakota's public media network.

I am John Harris, President and CEO of Prairie Public Broadcasting.

On behalf of Prairie Public Broadcasting, I request you support Governor Armstrong's budget of \$2,864,000 for Prairie Public in this year's biennial budget.

In 2024, Prairie Public celebrated 60 years of service to North Dakota. We began in 1964 with a single broadcast tower, and since then have grown to provide public media services that impact the citizens of our entire state—from childhood through all phases of life.

Education is the cornerstone of Prairie Public's mission. We provide researched, high-quality digital resources and learning materials to students, educators, parents, counselors, librarians, and tech coordinators, and we conduct professional training opportunities to help them use those tools in our region's classrooms.

Prairie Public provides public media services that educate, involve, and inspire the people of the prairie region. Public media strengthens communities and helps them to prosper. The citizens of North Dakota know the importance of a strong and viable public media entity for our community. We are committed to respect for our audience, civil discourse, and lifelong learning.

In addition, Prairie Public has embraced our public safety mission to maximize our spectrum for the public good. Public television stations are the backbone of the WARN system of presidential alerts in times of national emergency. Prairie Public is vital to our state as a locally owned and operated media organization that can serve in times of crisis.

Even as public distrust of national institutions and media is at an all-time high, studies show that public broadcasters retain the trust of the American people as an essential resource for well-informed citizens.

Prairie Public is a reliable source for international, regional, and local news from the worlds of politics, business, science, and the arts. In fact, our network of television, radio, and online services was one of the most comprehensive and trusted sources for statewide election coverage and debates during the 2024 election—vital for thoughtful citizens and healthy societies. Our coverage of the North Dakota legislature, including the long-running

program *North Dakota Legislative Review* and the new podcast *In Session*, helps you to serve your constituents and communicate the good work you accomplish.

In addition to broadcasting nationally produced television and radio programs such as *PBS News Hour*, *Nature*, *NOVA*, *Masterpiece*, *Morning Edition*, and *All Things Considered*, Prairie Public produces an extraordinary amount of quality programming that reflects North Dakota's history, culture, and issues of concern.

Our local productions cover topics ranging from community events to rural healthcare issues to legislative news. We partner with local agencies to help inform our citizens of critical issues that affect each and every one of us.

Prairie Public helps to preserve the history and culture of our region with locally produced documentaries. We celebrate local artists with our series *Prairie Musicians* and *Prairie Mosaic*. We interview newsmakers and difference makers weekdays on *Main Street* and weekly on *Prairie Pulse*.

The state of North Dakota has, for years, played a vital supporting role in the operation of our public media services. While the appropriation from the state of North Dakota does not cover all the expenses, many of the services would not be possible without state funding that provide the foundation for support from many other sources. It is important that North Dakota sustain its public media system.

The request for funding of \$2,864,000 includes 1.164M for operational support plus one time only funding of \$1.7M for the 2025-2027 biennial session. These funds, along with other resources from local and federal sources, will be used to continue Prairie Public's services to the citizens of North Dakota.

Prairie Public requests the state fund the one time only support of \$1,700,000 to assist in the interconnection of ten radio and nine television transmitters. While these are not the total needs for Prairie Public, these transmitters and their interconnection are the backbone for delivering our services to North Dakota. Prairie Public secured last session \$2,100,000 from the State of Minnesota for upgrades to the eastern part of our coverage area.

Prairie Public and its members are deeply grateful to you for your past support. In all the years Prairie Public has been broadcasting, technology keeps changing, but our mission to provide services that educate, involve, and inspire has not.

In closing, let me remind you that Prairie Public belongs to the citizens of our region, and with your support Prairie Public will continue to be a community leader and assist the state in achieving its goals of economic strength, educational quality, and pride in our rich heritage.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, thank you for your time and consideration.



Annual Report



Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.
Fiscal Year 2024

On January 19, 1964,
Prairie Public's first station—KFME in Fargo—signed on
as North Dakota's educational television station.

1959

The North Central Educational Television Association was incorporated by Dr. Ted Donat.

1964

KFME signed on as the first educational television station in North Dakota.

1981

KCND-FM in Bismarck signed on, the first station on North Dakota Public Radio.

1994

Prairie Online implemented an online service that provided access to information and discussion for North Dakotans.

2004

Dakota Datebook, a daily look at North Dakota history, premiered on radio.

2006

Prairie Public Television and North Dakota Public Radio merged brands to become Prairie Public.

2016

Members get extended access to PBS shows on-demand through Passport and the PBS app.

2024

Prairie Public celebrates 60!



A newspaper article from that year described our station as “provid[ing] televised material which can be used in classrooms ... but an equally large segment of its programming will be devoted to entertainment. Entertainment with a purpose, to be sure: it will encourage the viewer to use his mind as well as his eyes.”

In other words, we were set out to educate, involve, and inspire our viewers. Sound familiar? Our values then are still shining through in our mission today.

In the decades that have passed since that article was written, Prairie Public has grown to cover the entire state of North Dakota, northwest Minnesota, and Manitoba, introduced a statewide radio network, and become a PBS and NPR member station. We went from black-and-white to color, and have now entered the world of on-demand streaming with Passport, apps, and podcasts.

Through all the changes that Prairie Public has seen, there has been one constant—the unwavering support from people like you. Our members, listeners, and viewers have kept us going from day one.

Whether it's been through your membership or by simply enjoying our programs and advocating for our essential service, we thank you for keeping us going. Prairie Public wouldn't be here if not for your belief in our mission—those values we've held since our early days in 1964.

With gratitude,
John E. Harris III
President & CEO

Prairie Public Broadcasting provides quality radio, television, and public media services that **educate, involve, and inspire** the people of the prairie region.

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Director of Radio

Ann Alquist

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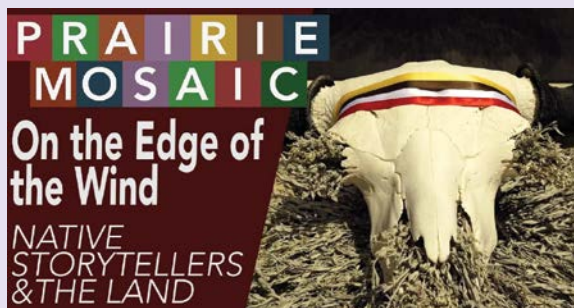
Fiscal Year 2024

October 1, 2023–September 30, 2024

IN THE STUDIO



Prairie Musicians Slamabama brought high energy country pop to the stage, Poitin explored Irish and Metis Red River traditional music, and so much more in this year's season of Prairie Musicians.



Prairie Mosaic Prairie Mosaic captured stories that offer a window into the arts, culture, and history of the prairie region.



Prairie Pulse Prairie Public's longstanding weekly affairs show, Prairie Pulse, tackled the social and political issues that matter most to viewers like you.

THE NUMBERS BEYOND THE AIRWAVES

15,028 People individuals made contributions to Prairie Public
5,710 Sustainers

Original **Prairie Public productions** received **6** Telly Awards
Productions

Places
Prairie Public members live in
Every county of North Dakota
48 states and Washington DC
6 Canadian provinces &
2 territories

1.2+ million streams on YouTube
844,000+ people reached on Facebook
8+ million streams of PBS KIDS shows
630,000+ visits to the website
380,726 radio streaming sessions
Counselling

IN THE NEWSROOM

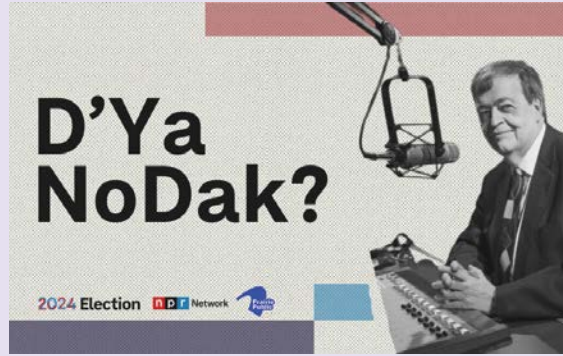


Ann Alquist, Director of Radio

Prairie Public's longtime Director of Radio Bill Thomas retired, and in January we welcomed his successor, Ann Alquist. Ann brings more than 20 years of experience innovating public media at stations across the country. She is driven to provide trustworthy news and information, especially in rural communities.



Former Director of Radio Bill Thomas



D'Ya NoDak?

Prairie Public leaned into News Director Dave Thompson's extensive knowledge and deep political memory in a new e-newsletter, D'Ya NoDak. The newsletter

launched in April as a run-up to the June primaries and unpacks North Dakota elections and politics.

America Amplified

Prairie Public took part in America Amplified, a national public media initiative, to engage directly with communities and drive election coverage. Through this partnership,

Prairie Public hosted an online election information portal, where listeners submitted any question they had about voting or elections, and received accurate answers.



IN THE COMMUNITY



Prairie Public Learning Express

A new initiative designed to extend the reach of our services to expanded audiences launched this year. The Learning Express is a mobile trailer that travels to childcare centers, schools, and libraries across our region—free of charge! These services help us fulfill our mission to educate, involve, and inspire the people of the prairie region.

Be My Neighbor Day

Nearly 500 community members gathered to celebrate kindness and what it means to be a caring neighbor at Prairie Public's inaugural Be My Neighbor Day in Fargo. Children and families had the chance to meet Daniel Tiger from PBS KIDS' series "Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood," and community partners facilitated engaging, hands-on activities and crafts.



Prairie Public is **listener and viewer-supported public media**, which means this belongs to you.



Prairie Public brings us information from all over the country but it also brings us information from some of the far-flung corners of our state. And I think that's really valuable.—Nancy Guy, Bismarck, ND



While growing up, the world in pre-Internet rural North Dakota seemed limited. PBS opened the door to art, culture, music, movies, love and life in a way that radio and books couldn't.—Jeffrey Gion, Regent, ND



Charity Navigator, a nonprofit organization providing free access to data, tools, and resources to guide philanthropic decision-making, has given Prairie Public a four-star rating (with a score of 97%), meaning you can confidently support Prairie Public.

BEQUESTS

The following people honored Prairie Public with gifts in their estate. With deep regard, we remember these friends for their special commitment to sustaining Prairie Public for future generations.

Estate of Betty Mills
Estate of Joanne Ashley

Television

Prairie Public reaches households in North Dakota, northwestern Minnesota, and parts of South Dakota, Montana, and Manitoba with four program streams. Viewers who use a rooftop antenna receive all four, and viewers who use cable, dish, or satellite services receive Prairie Public's primary schedule and one or more additional streams. Prairie Public is available online and on the **PBS app**, **YouTube TV**, and **Hulu + Live TV**.

Radio

Beach **91.5 fm**
Bismarck **90.5 fm**
Bowman **91.9 fm**
Devils Lake **91.7 fm**
Dickinson **89.9 fm**
Fargo **91.9 fm**
Grand Forks **89.3 fm**
Grand Forks **90.7 fm**
Hettinger **91.9 fm**
Jamestown **91.5 fm**
Minot **88.9 fm**
Williston **88.7 fm**
Williston **89.5 fm**
Plentywood MT **91.9 fm**



Corporate office

Prairie Public
207 5th St N
Fargo, ND 58102

Contact

701-241-6900
info@prairiepublic.org
prairiepublic.org

Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc

Tax ID: 45-0276899

Prairie Public Television (Manitoba), Inc

Charitable #: 119097913 RR0001

Our audited annual financial report for the year ending 9/30/2024 will be available in early spring 2025 at prairiepublic.org.



Annual Financial Report

for the Year Ending **9/30/24** • Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

Sources	Television		Radio		Total
	Amount	%	Amount	%	
Membership	\$1,545,017	15%	\$525,091	16%	\$2,070,108
Underwriting	\$152,884	2%	\$129,836	4%	\$282,720
Corporation for Public Broadcasting	\$1,717,289	16%	\$233,068	7%	\$1,950,357
Local Production Funding	\$119,485	1%	\$76,625	2%	\$196,110
State of North Dakota ¹	\$1,296,225	12%	\$200,000	6%	\$1,496,225
State of Minnesota ¹	\$869,779	8%	\$0	0%	\$869,779
Grants	\$157,933	2%	\$0	0%	\$157,933
Fees, Rents	\$743,915	7%	\$319,711	10%	\$1,063,626
Charitable Gaming	\$1,198,945	12%	\$564,210	17%	\$1,763,155
Planned Giving ²	\$1,578,998	15%	\$732,990	23%	\$2,311,988
Other ³	\$1,057,604	10%	\$485,587	15%	\$1,543,191
TOTAL SOURCES	\$10,438,074	100%	\$3,267,118	100%	\$13,705,192
Uses					
Programming & Production	\$2,749,019	29%	\$1,427,399	39%	\$4,176,418
Engineering	\$1,283,225	13%	\$274,916	8%	\$1,558,141
Administration ³	\$1,596,043	17%	\$751,080	21%	\$2,347,123
Fundraising	\$362,922	4%	\$86,967	2%	\$449,889
System Upgrade & Other	\$1,695,336	18%	\$383,656	11%	\$2,078,992
Change in Prairie Public Endowment	\$1,863,513	19%	\$706,999	19%	\$2,570,512
TOTAL USES	\$9,550,058	100%	\$3,631,017	100%	\$13,181,075
EXCESS (DEFICIT) SOURCES OVER USES	\$888,016		(\$363,899)		\$524,117

Financial data provided from Eide Bailly LLP audited financial statements of Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

1. Revenues include on-going and general revenue, and additional revenue from one-time funding available for capital projects; North Dakota, \$896,225 and Minnesota, \$147,260.

2. Planned giving includes contributions, realized gains, and unrealized gains to Endowment Funds.

3. Other sources include \$1,117,083 of revenue from insurance claims related to tower sites and the Fargo Building. Related expenses are recognized as incurred among the list of uses. Administration includes \$553,845 in repairs to the Fargo Building.

Local support composed of membership and underwriting is the largest source of unrestricted support for Prairie Public Broadcasting, Inc.

WINTER **cue** 2024

A quarterly newsletter for members of Prairie Public

MASTERPIECE

ALL CREATURES GREAT & SMALL

SEASON 5 PREMIERES SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, AT 8PM



If you can't wait until January to return to the beautiful Yorkshire Dales, watch Seasons 1-4 of ALL CREATURES GREAT & SMALL all over again with **Prairie Public Passport**.



CARL THE COLLECTOR

Carl The Collector centers on autistic characters

Carl The Collector, new on PBS KIDS, follows the everyday adventures of Carl, a warm-hearted autistic raccoon who loves collecting things.

His talents—a laser-focus pursuit of his goals, attention to detail, and a distinctive way of looking at and experiencing the world around him—have helped him amass a collection for just about every occasion (e.g., the perfect fake mustache or a soft plushie for a friend in need), and come in handy for solving problems around the neighborhood with his friends.

Carl's friends include both neurotypical and neurodiverse characters, each with different traits, behaviors, learning preferences, and challenges.

Watch Carl the Collector on [weekdays at 7:30am](#) on Prairie Public and streaming on PBS KIDS.

AGE RANGE EXPANDED TO K-5! PBS KIDS WRITERS CONTEST

Get out your crayons and markers! **Prairie Public's PBS KIDS Writers Contest** begins accepting submissions in January. Each year, children in Prairie Public's broadcast area are invited to write and illustrate their own stories to submit. Every entrant is a winner and will receive a Certificate of Achievement—top stories win prizes, and are featured online and on the radio.



This year, we're expanding the age range to include children in *Kindergarten to 5th grade!* We can't wait to see the stories you come up with.

The deadline for submissions is **March 31, 2025.**

Find rules and entry forms at prairiepublic.org/writerscontest.

Illustration from last year's Grade 1 winner, "The Beautiful Oops" by Gwendolyn A.

Travels with Darley returns to " Fargo & Beyond!"

The new season of the popular public television travel show **Travels with Darley** will feature an episode with some familiar places!

In the episode "**Fargo & Beyond**," host Darley Newman showcases the art and food of Fargo, travels to Carrington to sample ice cream at Cows & Co. Creamery, and comes face-to-face with a bison at the North American Bison Discovery Center in Jamestown.

Watch "**Fargo & Beyond**" on **Travels with Darley** on [Sunday, February 2, at 3:30pm](#).



EVERY GIFT MAKES AN IMPACT!

As we approach the end of the year, we want to take a moment to thank you for your support. Your generosity fuels our mission, and each contribution—big or small—helps us bring about lasting change. Here's how you can continue to help:

1. Use the enclosed envelope to make a year-end gift.
2. Make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from your IRA.
3. Become an Investors Circle Member with an annual gift of \$1,200 or more!
4. Leave a legacy of generosity by including us in your estate plan.
5. Donate Stocks or Securities.

Thank you for making a tax-deductible year-end gift. 2024 Tax receipts will be mailed in early January.

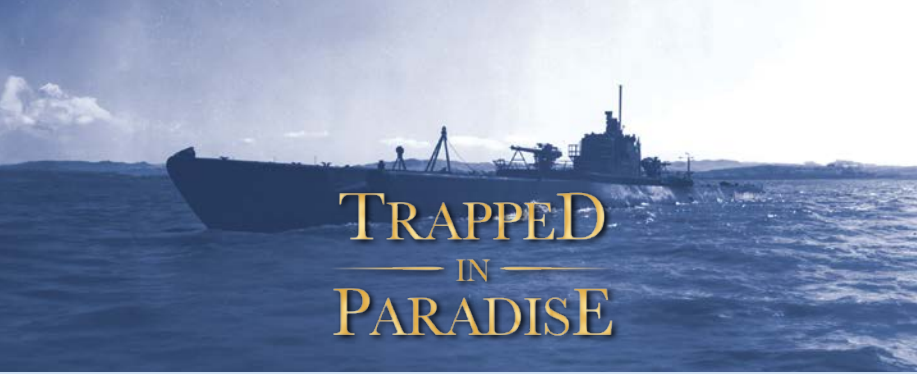
Troy Davis, Development Director
tdavis@prairiepublic.org • 800-359-6900 ext. 510



Corporate Office • 207 North 5th Street • Fargo ND 58102 • 800-359-6900 • info@prairiepublic.org • prairiepublic.org • Follow us [@prairiepublic](#)

Please remember Prairie Public Broadcasting in your will, trust, or general estate plans.





*New from
Prairie Public*

In the fall of 1940, in Orange, California, four nuns of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Orange embarked on a long voyage to the missions

of the South Pacific. The focus of this missionary work for Sisters Celestine, Isabelle, Irene, and Hedda, was to heal the sick and provide education to the Indigenous peoples of the Solomon Islands.

Sister Hedda was charged with keeping written records and reports of their work. Following the events of Pearl Harbor, her journals transform from daily life as missionaries, to keeping one step ahead of the Japanese who have begun to establish dominance in the South Pacific, including the Solomon Islands. This act of power by the Japanese naval forces pushed the sisters to take refuge in the deep jungles of the islands.

*No one could have predicted the need to flee.
No one could have predicted the urgency to do so,
No one could have predicted the method of their
salvation from danger. —Sister Hedda*

Tune in or stream the new Prairie Public original production, **Trapped in Paradise**, on *Thursday, December 12, at 7pm.*



From the mountains of West Virginia to the plains of North Dakota

Since 1983, **Mountain Stage** has been the home of live music on public radio.

Recorded in front of a live audience, Mountain Stage features performances from seasoned legends and emerging stars in genres ranging from folk, blues, and country; to indie rock, synth pop, world music, alternative, and beyond.

Turn on your radio and unwind with **Mountain Stage** every *Sunday evening from 8-10pm.*

The man behind the microphone

Q&A
with Dave Thompson



Listeners across North Dakota have heard Prairie Public's News Director, Dave Thompson, greet them nearly every morning for more than 40 years. In fact, he was the first voice ever on Prairie Public's radio service when we first went on the air in 1981.

Soon, Dave will host our new season of North Dakota Legislative Review—his series of interviews with North Dakota state senators and congresspeople during the North Dakota Legislative Session. Get to know more about Dave below!

Q You've been working at Prairie Public for more than 40 years. What is one of the most memorable stories you've reported on?

A One story dates to 1984—the controversy over when the Governor takes office. Incumbent Gov. Allen Olson (R) lost his bid for re-election to George Sinner (D), but there was a dispute over when a Governor actually took office. Sinner said he would take office January 1, 1985. Olson maintained the term began when the Legislature convened. The state Supreme Court ruled in favor of Sinner, but that ruling came on January 5.

Q How have you built trust with our audience and your sources?

A My staff and I have built trust by making sure our stories are fair, and we explore many sides of the issue. I have called our reporting style "information, not confrontation." That doesn't mean we won't be tough when it is warranted. To me, a high compliment came from one of the governors, who said, "I may not like what you are reporting, but I trust it. It's fair."

Q How are you preparing for the upcoming season of Legislative Review?

A I like our format of North Dakota Legislative Review. We look at the issues, and what's at stake in the session, and we have guests who get a chance to explain the issues and their stances. Again, the mission is information—we aren't going to tell you how we think the issue should be handled—that's up to the listener and the viewer.

North Dakota Legislative Review will premiere in January on our television and radio networks.



A quarterly newsletter for members of Prairie Public WINTER 2024

'Tis the Season!

Spend your holidays with Prairie Public by enjoying special programs throughout the month of December.

Go to prairiepublic.org/holidays2024 to see the festive lineup.



DRAMA PREMIERES IN JANUARY

Prairie Public is your home for new drama in the new year! Watch or stream with your Passport member benefit.



January 5
Vienna Blood
Season 4



January 12
Miss Scarlet
Season 5
Streaming now on Passport!



January 12
All Creatures Great & Small
Season 5

prairie musicians

LINEUP ANNOUNCED FOR THE UPCOMING SEASON

Watch or stream the new season of **PRAIRIE MUSICIANS** on *Thursdays at 9pm, beginning January 30*, to see original music performed by talented regional musicians.

SEASON 2025 LINEUP

Conor Lee Band
Dillon Spurlin
Duly Noted Acoustic Duo
Jackson Burns
Lula

Jake Ingamar
Matt Arthur Contraption
Max Patzner
Morning Bird
Rusty Crayfish Brass Band