

To the North Dakota Legislature,

My name is Craig Blumenshine, and I am the Host and Producer of Main Street on the radio service of Prairie Public. With over a decade of experience covering the legislature in Wyoming, I've witnessed firsthand the importance of robust, independent journalism, especially at a time when fewer journalists are actively engaged in legislative coverage. Now, Prairie Public, along with my show Main Street, plays a vital role in promoting transparency and fostering informed civic engagement throughout the state.

This Thursday, January 30, you will hear testimony on HB 1255, a bill that would eliminate state funding for Prairie Public. I strongly urge you to oppose this bill.

For more than 60 years, Prairie Public has been a lifeline for North Dakotans. It serves as a vital educational and cultural resource, providing free access to rural and urban communities alike. As the backbone of the Emergency Alert System (EAS), Prairie Public ensures the safety and preparedness of our state during emergencies. Additionally, it offers critical resources for schools, families, and young learners, including PBS KIDS programming that prepares children for success in school and life.

Prairie Public plays a vital role in strengthening our democracy by delivering fact-based news coverage and insightful political analysis, empowering citizens to engage in the legislative process as informed participants. Take Dave Thompson, our dedicated news director; few can match his decades-long commitment to covering North Dakota's government with such depth and integrity. He works hard because what YOU do is important.

In addition to its exceptional news reporting, Prairie Public's historical and cultural programming preserves and celebrates North Dakota's unique stories, enriching our collective understanding of who we are as a people and a state.

The loss of state funding for Prairie Public would be a significant blow to these essential services, impacting countless North Dakotans who rely on this organization for safety, education, integrity and connection.

Thank you for considering the far-reaching consequences of HB 1255. I encourage you to continue supporting Prairie Public's invaluable contributions to our state and vote against this bill.