

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Linda DiVall and Geoff Garin
DATE: February 3, 2017
RE: Key Findings from National Voter Survey on Federal Funding for Public Television

On behalf of public television, the bipartisan polling team of Hart Research Associates (D) and American Viewpoint (R) conducted a nationwide telephone survey among a representative cross section of 1,001 registered voters. Interviewing was conducted from January 4 to 8, 2017, and the survey results have an overall margin of error of ± 3.1 percentage points. The survey explored voters' attitudes toward public television and their feelings about cutting federal funding for public television. This memorandum highlights the key findings that emerge from this survey.

Key Findings In Brief

Our survey finds that while the country may be deeply divided on many issues, the importance of federal funding for public television is not one of them. In fact, with remarkable consistency, majorities of voters of all political stripes support federal funding for public television and do not want to see it eliminated. Voters see public television as a good value proposition for the American taxpayer, and express high levels of concern about the consequences should federal funding for public television be eliminated.

1. Voters overwhelmingly oppose eliminating federal funding for public television, with majorities of Democrats, independents, and Republicans holding this view.
2. Indeed, the vast majority of voters want to increase or maintain current levels of federal funding for public television, and would instruct Congress to find other places to save money rather than cut federal funding for public television.
3. A significant majority of voters believe that it is important for our nation to have a strong public television system, and the vast majority see public television as a good value for the taxpayer's dollar.
4. Voters are deeply concerned about the potential consequences of eliminating federal funding for public television. They believe that such actions would cause significant losses for their families, communities, and the country overall.

Key Findings In Detail

1 **Voters overwhelmingly support federal funding for public television. This support is the majority view across the political spectrum.** Nearly three in four (73%) voters oppose eliminating federal funding, with 44% of voters strongly opposing it, including 83% of Democrats, 82% of independents, and 62% of Republicans. Six in 10 (59%) Trump voters and those who voted for a Republican for Congress in 2016 (60%) oppose eliminating federal funding for public television, and among voters in states that flipped from blue to red in the 2016 presidential election, 76% agree that federal funding for public television should not be eliminated.

Across the four regions of the country, solid majorities in the Northeast (82%), South (68%), Midwest (74%), and West (69%) oppose elimination of federal funding. The support for federal funding of public television persists across all segments of the voting public.

Opposition to Eliminating Federal Funding for Public Television Is Strong							
	Favor	Oppose	Strongly Oppose		Favor	Oppose	Strongly Oppose
	%	%	%		%	%	%
All Voters	22	73	44	Northeast	16	82	48
Men non-college grads	25	69	38	South	25	68	41
Men college grads	19	78	50	Midwest	21	74	44
Women non-college grads	25	69	39	West	25	69	45
Women college grads	16	80	54	City	17	78	50
Age 18 to 34	25	70	31	Suburb	20	74	47
Age 35 to 49	21	75	49	Small town	25	70	41
Age 50 to 64	21	73	49	Rural area	26	70	38
Age 65/older	21	73	47	Democrats	12	83	60
Parents	23	70	40	Independents	17	82	41
Whites	23	73	44	Republicans	32	62	29
Blacks	13	77	51	Clinton voters	11	86	64
Hispanics	25	70	39	Trump voters	35	59	25

2 **Voters believe that they are getting very good value for their tax dollars when it comes to federal funding of public television.** More than seven in 10 (72%) voters rate public television as an excellent or good value for the taxpayer. This belief is the solid majority view across all regions of the country, with 76% of voters in the Northeast, 73% of voters in the South, 68% in the Midwest, and 71% of voters in the West feeling that they get good value for the federal dollars invested in public television.

Public television’s high value rating is on par with that of our nation’s infrastructure, such as highways, roads, and bridges (73%). More voters rate public television as an excellent or good value than environmental protection, federal aid to college students, unemployment benefits, agricultural subsidies, or foreign aid.

Public Television Is An Excellent/Good Value For The Tax Dollar

	<u>All Voters</u>	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Independents</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Trump Voters</u>	<u>Voted GOP for Congress</u>
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Military defense	83	82	78	85	85	82
Social security	79	91	81	69	69	69
Highways, roads, bridges	73	73	63	72	71	74
Public television	72	83	71	62	60	62
Environmental protection	70	88	75	57	49	53
Federal aid to college students	67	75	67	57	55	58
Unemployment benefits	67	76	64	57	57	62
Agricultural subsidies	57	61	51	57	60	57
Foreign aid	45	62	46	31	27	32

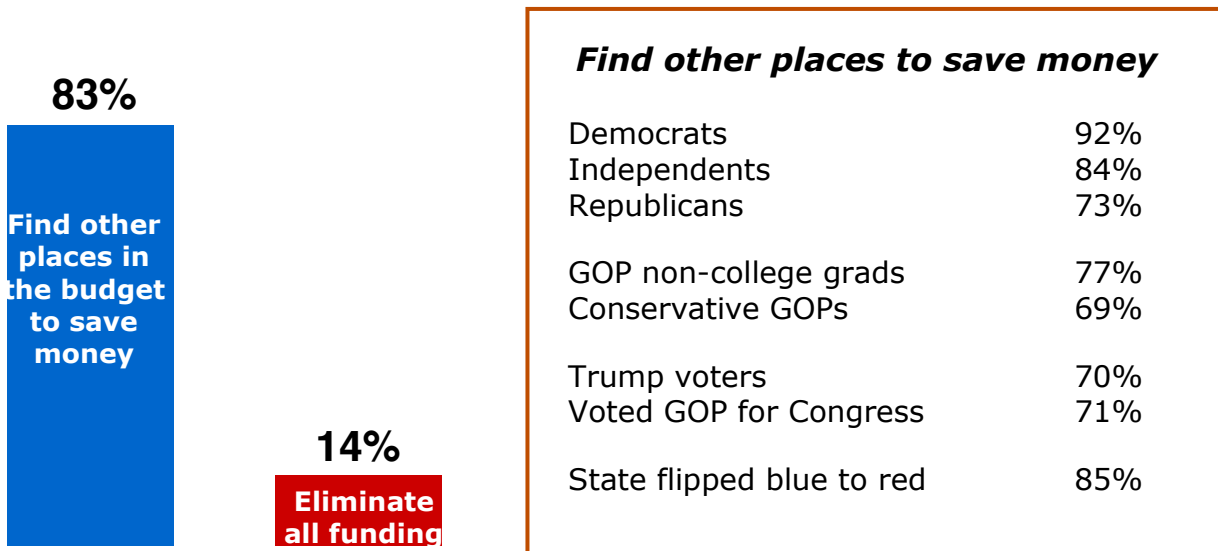
3 More than three in four (76%) voters want public television funding increased or maintained at current levels, including significant majorities across the political spectrum: 87% of Democrats, 78% of independents, and 65% of Republicans. Three in four (76%) voters in states that flipped from blue to red in the 2016 presidential election agree, as do 66% of those who voted for a Republican for Congress in 2016, 66% of Trump voters, and 86% of Clinton voters. Only 14% of all voters would prefer to decrease or eliminate federal funding for public television.

4 Two thirds (66%) of voters believe that a strong public television system is important for America, with nearly half (47%) saying it is “very important.” The belief that it is important for our country to have a strong public television system is the majority view regardless of age, education level, race, and region, as well as across the political spectrum.

5 When given the option, voters overwhelmingly want Congress to find other places in the budget to save money, versus eliminating funding for public television. If asked by their senator or congressperson about eliminating federal funding for public television, an impressive 83% of voters prefer that savings come from somewhere else. This holds true for the majority of Trump voters (70%) and Clinton voters (93%), and regionally in the Northeast (88%), South (80%), Midwest (82%),

and West (84%). Notably, this number is even higher among voters in states that flipped from blue to red in the 2016 election, with 85% wanting savings to come from somewhere other than public television.

"If your US senator or congressperson asked your opinion about eliminating federal funding for public television, what would you tell them to do?"



6 Most voters believe that eliminating federal funding for public television will cause significant losses for their family, their community, and most of all, for the country. If eliminating federal funding forces public television to cut programming and forces the closure of public television stations, 73% of all voters, including 86% of Democrats, 75% of independents, 61% of Republicans, as well as 60% of Trump voters would consider it a significant loss to the country. Seven in 10 (69%) voters would consider it a significant loss to their community, and six in 10 (60%) would consider it a significant loss to their family.

7 Concerns about the consequences of eliminating federal funding for public television run high. Fully 84% of voters—including 92% of Democrats, 83% of independents, and 77% of Republicans—express a great deal or fair amount of concern about the possible elimination of public safety communication services at the local and national levels, including severe weather advisories and AMBER alerts. Loss of educational content and resources also generates concern. Cuts to educational shows that help kids prepare for school concern 76% of voters. And a similar proportion (74%)

express concerns about cuts to content and resources teachers use in the classroom.

8 PBS/public television enjoys high favorability ratings among the electorate, with seven in 10 (69%) possessing positive feelings.

Public television evokes negative feelings among only 7% of voters. These positive feelings are strong across the electorate: 80% of Democrats, 64% of independents, and 61% of Republicans have positive feelings, as well as 72% of voters who live in states that flipped from blue to red in the 2016 presidential election, 62% of those who voted for a Republican in the 2016 Congressional election, and 60% of Trump voters.

Regardless of political stripes, voters feel favorable toward PBS/public television at much higher rates than they do toward commercial broadcast television networks, cable television networks, and newspapers.

9 Public television's core educational mission is the top reason why voters believe it is important to protect federal funding.

The fact that public television provides more than 120,000 learning tools and free resources for teachers, parents, and caregivers that reach more than 40 million children, and that public television is the number-one source of children's educational media, teaching skills such as social-emotional learning, early literacy, and math are deemed important reasons to protect federal funding by three in four voters, including two in three Republican voters.

Statements in favor of eliminating federal funding for public television do not resonate strongly with the voting public, regardless of political affiliation.