

Rescinding Woke and Weaponized Government Funding

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BOTTOM LINE

President Donald Trump's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) has identified billions in government waste and has cut many unnecessary federal grants and contracts. However, Congress has the power of the purse and must lead the effort to make lasting changes to federal spending levels. One of the primary ways in which the legislative and executive branches can work together to codify spending cuts is through rescissions. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has sent the first rescissions package to Congress outlining \$9.4 billion in cuts to discretionary funding of woke programs in foreign aid and public radio.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With strong interest from the American public to codify spending cuts recommended by DOGE, Congress should work with the Administration to:

- **Pass** the initial rescissions package to defund leftist organizations undermining American values at home and abroad;
- **Demonstrate** that it can pass additional rescissions packages to cut even more government waste; and
- **Pass** fiscal year (FY) 2026 appropriations bills in line with the President's budget that will lock in lower spending levels.

STATE OF PLAY

- The OMB sent a rescissions package to Congress outlining \$9.4 billion in cuts to federal funding on June 3, 2025.¹
- The House introduced H.R. 4, the Rescissions Act, on June 6, 2025.
- House floor consideration is expected by June 13, 2025.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at <https://report.heritage.org/pm01>

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Under the 1974 Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act, the President has the authority to submit to Congress a special message containing amounts of budget authority to be rescinded. Once the special message is received by Congress, it has 45 continuous session days to take action.² During this time the funds are not available for spending. If no action is taken, the rescission does not go into effect and the funds must be made available. A President also cannot submit the same rescission proposal more than once in a given fiscal year.³

Congress also has an expedited process to consider a rescissions proposal. Debate in the House of Representatives is limited to two hours, and to 10 hours in the Senate. A rescissions package is also not subject to the filibuster in the Senate; thus, it could pass with a simple majority vote in both chambers.⁴

ANALYSIS

One of the major successes of DOGE has been to expose how effective the Left has been at using government funding to aid its policy and political agenda. Even though the Left claims that its objective is to promote democracy at home and abroad, its members have successfully promoted their own policy agenda through international nongovernmental organizations and the funding of public radio through the Corporation of Public Broadcasting (CPB). While the overall dollar amount of this rescission package may seem small, the effectiveness of these programs to promote woke causes at the expense of American ideals is significant.

How USAID Went Woke. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was formed in 1961 to counter Soviet efforts to spread communism in the developing world, transition former communist countries into U.S. allies, and respond to global disasters, such as earthquakes, epidemics, famine, and massive movements of war refugees. It did so well. But sometime during the Clinton Administration, USAID began to promote radical social agendas, such as population control.⁵

Under President Barack Obama, LGBTQ+ and climate ideologies were added.⁶ President Joe Biden reached a new level when he issued a memorandum on advancing LGBTQ+ rights around the world, requiring all agencies engaged abroad to promote the LGBTQ+ agenda.⁷

Institutionally, USAID's political culture would eventually skew far left, purged of conservatives and independents. USAID no longer represented America or its values, becoming a taxpayer-funded haven for radicals controlled by an industry of global elites composed of former aid officers and officials from past Democratic Administrations.⁸

Complete Lack of Transparency. In 2023, Senator Joni Ernst (R-IA), now Chair of the DOGE Caucus, demanded to know the overhead charges of organizations and companies to see if they were overcharging taxpayers to carry out USAID's programs.⁹

She was repeatedly stonewalled, and her staff was threatened.¹⁰ Eventually, she found that half of aid funds were spent on overhead. A

government audit in 2024 found that USAID could not account for \$142.5 billion in overhead charges.¹¹ Foreign aid became a massive financial boon for progressives as ordinary Americans struggled to pay their bills.

The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), a bipartisan program that provides HIV/AIDS medications to countries with high rates of infection, is the largest federal global health program, spending \$6 billion annually. In 2022, the Biden Administration published a 10-year plan to "re-imagine" PEPFAR. Rather than focusing the program on ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic around the globe, the Biden Administration re-imagined PEPFAR into a LGBTQ+ and abortion-promotion program filled with fraud.

- From 2021 to 2023, corrupt Zambian officials took medicines and medical supplies that were meant to be provided free to Zambians, which Zambian pharmacies then sold across the country.¹² The rescissions package sent to Congress calls for a \$3 million cut to PEPFAR money for Zambia.
- After the Biden Administration and many Members of Congress claimed that PEPFAR was not being used to promote abortion, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention discovered in 2024 that four nurses in Mozambique were performing abortions while receiving PEPFAR grants.¹³ The issue of PEPFAR grantees performing abortions is likely larger than this isolated incident, after House Foreign Affairs member Chris Smith (R-NJ) exposed the various ways that the Biden Administration promoted abortion through the program.¹⁴
- The rescissions package also requests a cut to millions of global health accounts for LGBTQ+ programs that were used to promote "intersex and queer global movements" and "sex workers and their clients."

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The CPB was created in 1967 to act as a vehicle for the collection of moneys appropriated by Congress and to then distribute those funds to National Public Radio (NPR), the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and more than 1,500 local television and radio stations nationwide. The CPB receives a two-year advance appropriation from Congress. The latest appropriations bill passed by Congress included \$535 million in CPB annual funding for FY 2027.

Public Radio Is Unnecessary. When NPR CEO Katherine Maher testified before the House Oversight Committee in March 2025, she made the case that federal funding for the CPB is essential to maintaining local public radio, broadcasting emergency alerts, and providing educational content to communities in need.¹⁵ However, there are multiple arguments for ceasing to supply NPR, PBS, and the other broadcasters with the taxpayer's money.

The arrangement is unfair to private-sector media competitors, like MSNBC and Salem Radio, that are forced to compete without public funding. There is also the fact that this funding is a regressive tax. It is a forced wealth transfer from working families to the most affluent pockets of society, which constitute the lion's share of NPR's audience.¹⁶

While the CPB does fund the Satellite Interconnection Fund, which is a critical system for distributing emergency warnings, this important function can be funded separately and operated through another government entity, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, without the need to underwrite the biased coverage of NPR and PBS.

Finally, public subsidies for public broadcasting are no longer necessary. It was created with the promise that it would be educational in nature and abstain from controversial public affairs. But in the present age, when thousands of competitors have come online in the form of podcasts, and with the educational programming component of PBS much diminished, public subsidies for the CPB are no longer necessary. An example is PBS's most famous children's program, *Sesame Street*, which is no longer exclusive to PBS. It was first bought by HBO in 2015, which had exclusive rights to air new episodes before they could air on PBS. Netflix, the latest buyer of *Sesame Street* will air episodes simultaneously with PBS—an arrangement that demonstrates the lack of need for public subsidies given that for-profit companies are now producing new episodes.

Political Bias. Through their radical leftwing bias, NPR and PBS have violated the public trust and have therefore forsaken their claim on the public's money.¹⁷ During the pandemic, NPR hitched its wagon firmly to the preferred progressive narrative—that the virus had a natural origin. At the time, the outlet trashed as “racist” the possibility that the virus had leaked from a laboratory in the Chinese city that is home to one of China's premier virology labs.¹⁸ Today, several U.S. intelligence agencies conclude with varying degrees of confidence that COVID-19 escaped from a lab in Wuhan.¹⁹

The bias at NPR and PBS is also easy to quantify. The conservative-leaning Media Research Center (MRC) has been doing tallies of it for years. The *PBS NewsHour*, for example, routinely books many more liberal guests than conservatives. Over a four-month period from November 2022 to February 2023, MRC found that liberal Democratic guests outnumbered conservative Republican guests by 3.7 to one. When elected officials and political appointees were removed from the guest count, the disparity was even more striking, reaching a ratio of 5.7 to one.²⁰

An MRC analysis also found that during the 2024 presidential campaign, PBS treated the Republican Party convention to 72 percent negative and 28 percent positive commentary.²¹ By contrast, the Democratic Party convention played with a home field advantage: it received only 12 percent negative coverage and 88 percent positive commentary.²²

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RELATED MATERIALS

- *Commentary:* [How USAID Went Woke and Destroyed Itself](#), February 10, 2025.
- *Testimony:* [Anti-American Airwaves Holding Heads of NPR and PBS Accountable](#), April 2, 2025.
- *Issue Brief:* [NPR HAS No Right to Taxpayer Money and No Monopoly on Emergency Alerts](#), June 4, 2025.

ENDNOTES

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