

For Immediate Release

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Statement of the Affinity Group Coalition

September 26, 2011

On August 25 and 26, 2011, the Affinity Group Coalition (AGC) met in Chicago to discuss the state of the public media system and the AGC's role in change management for the system. Since the AGC met in concert with the PBS Strategic Planning Advisory committee last February, they prepared for the August meeting by clearly and concisely outlining the current state of the public media system and the pressures and changes occurring within the system.

Each of the AGC members -- the Major Market Group, the University Licensee Association, the Small Station Association, the Beta Group, NETA, the Joint Licensee Group, and OSBE -- agreed, both within their individual coalitions and within the broader scope of the AGC, to address the effects that have occurred as a result of these changes and pressures. These effects include a decrease in the amount of local programming stations are able to achieve and an erosion of investment in national programming.

The changes are attributed to the combination of the economic stress occurring in the country over the past three years, and the technological transformation within our industry, beginning with the digital transition. The AGC concluded that, "stations must individually (and collectively) focus on decreasing the cost of broadcast distribution and minimize infrastructure and administration so that resources can be invested in services that have impact and meaning in local communities."

At the Chicago meeting, the AGC formally adopted the following five action items:

- (1.) The AGC commits itself to promoting the need for immediate action by stations;*
- (2.) The AGC endorses and encourages the exploration of operational centralization/outsourcing and station consolidation so as to enhance local content and services;*
- (3.) The AGC commits to study the impact of state government funding cuts, which could have significant and immediate impact on service within specific states and impact on the public television system as a whole;*
- (4.) Each affinity group agrees to engage board and licensee leadership in system wide and individual organization change efforts and to share these efforts among the affinity groups; and*
- (5.) The AGC agrees to work with David LaPiana and the PBS Strategic Planning Advisory Group to develop case studies of effective change efforts that have occurred and models that could work for the future.*

Statement of the Public Television Affinity Group Coalition, September 26, 2011

In the first step of moving forward with the five action items, the AGC is circulating this document broadly among station managers and representatives of the national organizations. This will begin the process of engaging the public television community and inform all of the need for immediate action by stations and the industry as a whole.

Additionally, on recommendation of the chair and in order to move the adopted five steps forward, the AGC agreed to the support of four committees (members to be appointed) for the 2012 fiscal year:

- Education – Jack Galmiche, chair
- State funding – John Harris, chair
- Communication – Polly Anderson, chair
- Structures and Services – Ted Krichels, chair

Committee chairs will work with the AGC chair to clarify the charge for each committee. Engagement of all four of the committees has begun, and it is the intention of the AGC that, through the work of the committees and the AGC as a whole, the five action items will see positive movement that will be reported back to the system by December 31, 2011. AGC leadership (Chair David Dial, Vice-Chair Malcolm Brett and Immediate Past Chair Peter Morrill) will be meeting by conference call with the committee chairs bi-monthly for the foreseeable future.

In addition to the formation of the four committees, it was decided that a “stress test” for stations is needed in order to assist station managers and boards in assessing the vulnerability of a station as compared with stations within their cohort and the system as a whole. Kevin Martin of CPB and Steve Bass of Oregon Public Broadcasting agreed to identify and provide to the AGC the key elements of the “stress test” CPB has utilized for stations. It is anticipated that the AGC will receive this within the next month.

The AGC is unanimous in its agreement to assist the system at this critical time; to be an advocate of change and to represent their member stations in positive communication with each other and with our national organizations. The AGC invites station managers to contribute to this effort through communication with their AGC representatives. We look forward to assisting the system at this critical time.

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