

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

The Administration today sent a bill to the Congress that will appropriate Federal funds for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting over a five-year period, starting with \$70 million in fiscal 1976 and reaching \$100 million by 1980. To assure that Federal support does not dominate public broadcasting and to encourage continued non-Federal contributions, the Federal funds would be provided on a matching basis -- with one Federal dollar for every \$2.50 in non-Federal revenues up to the annual ceiling.

Since enactment of the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, the Federal Government has supported the growth and development of non-commercial educational radio and television through annual appropriations. During this time, public broadcasting has developed and matured into a far-reaching, effective medium for bringing high quality educational and cultural programming to millions of Americans.

A recurring question in public broadcasting has been how to reconcile Government funding with the possibility of Government control. On the one hand, if Federal funds are used to support public broadcasting, the Government must be able to evaluate how the funds are spent. To do otherwise would be irresponsible. On the other hand, strict accountability by public broadcasting to the Government can lead to Government direction of programming, which is contrary to the principles of free expression on which our Nation was founded. It is this issue alone which requires that the Congress consider a five-year appropriation for public broadcasting.

This bill is a constructive approach to the sensitive relationship between Federal funding and freedom of expression. It would eliminate the scrutiny of programming that could be associated with the normal budgetary and appropriations processes of the Government. At the same time, it would still permit periodic review of public broadcasting by the Congress. I believe that it will assure the independence of non-commercial radio and television programming for our Nation; and, long-term Federal funding will add stability to the financing of public broadcasting which may enhance the quality of its programming. I urge the Congress to enact it promptly.