

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2025

Mr. Victor Morales, Acting CEO
Ms. Kari Lake, Senior Advisor
U.S. Agency for Global Media
330 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20237

Dear Acting CEO Morales and Ms. Lake:

You are at the helm of an agency with a critical mission to increase freedom of expression, circumvent censorship, and deliver objective, accurate, and relevant information to hundreds of millions of people worldwide. This mission directly supports U.S. national security and foreign policy interests.

Given its importance, we write to express our concerns with the decisions you have made in response to the March 14, 2025 Executive Order titled “*Executive Order on Continuing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy.*”

Congress reaffirmed its commitment to your agency, its mission, and its personnel by funding the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM) at \$866.9 million in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extension Act, 2025, and expects that each of the entities will continue their unique mission of broadcasting content to audiences around the world. Your decisions to terminate the grants to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia (RFA) (in addition to withholding funds for the BenarNews service), Middle East Broadcasting Networks, and Open Technology Fund; place on administrative leave Voice of America (VOA), Office of Cuba Broadcasting, Technology, Services, and Innovation, and other federal staff; cancel hundreds of contracts; and pull transmissions from the air violate several provisions in the appropriations bill. This includes sections 7015 and 7063, and the provisions under the United States Agency for Global Media heading, of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2024, as carried forward by the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extension Act, 2025.

Additionally, the actions you have taken to significantly downsize the agency, including termination of the new building lease and closeout costs, will cost the U.S. taxpayer hundreds of millions of dollars.

These actions are not just illegal and wasteful, they run counter to our interests. America’s authoritarian adversaries are investing billions in state-backed media, targeting the same countries USAGM entities reach. With an audience of 427 million people speaking more than 60 languages, USAGM networks are a trusted and reliable source of information in the face of state censorship, including in the People’s Republic of China, Iran, Russia, North Korea, Cuba, and Afghanistan, and across Eastern Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia. The technology developed by the Open Technology Fund and used across grantees will leave users who are dependent on

their tools to circumvent censorship stranded. Once America loses the trust of these audiences, it will be difficult to get it back.

In 2020, when then-USAGM CEO Michael Pack instituted mass firings, then-Senator Rubio led a bipartisan effort to have such actions reversed.¹ In the letter, Senator Rubio and colleagues stated:

“We are at a critical moment in history where malign actors including Russia, China, and Iran, are using advanced tools and technology to undermine global democratic norms, spreading disinformation, and severely restricting their own free press to hamper access to independent news for their citizens. As these and other authoritarian regimes further crack down domestically, their citizens turn to outside media as their only trustworthy source of unbiased, accurate news.”

This is no less true today.

We are equally troubled that these actions put staff across all of those entities, who have faithfully served the interests of the U.S. government, at risk if they are forced to return to authoritarian countries where they may be subject to harassment, persecution, or arbitrary arrest. The agency appears to have no plan in place to address these risks. Already, 1,300 VOA staff and 75 percent of RFA U.S.-based staff have been put on leave.

We respectfully request that you rescind the actions you have taken to date and refrain from any further downsizing or terminations, and that you ensure you are in compliance with your legal requirements, including to consult and notify Congress of any proposed changes and to meet congressional spending directives. We request that you respond to this letter no later than April 4, 2025 confirming your intent to do so.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Brian Schatz
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Department of State,
Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Senate Committee on Appropriations



Lois Frankel
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security,
Department of State, and Related Programs
House Committee on Appropriations

¹ [Marco Rubio Wants Answers on Why USAGM CEO Fired Expert Staff, Network Heads - Florida Daily](#)



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Grace Meng
Member of Congress



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Chris S. Murphy
United States Senator