
NPR Announces Plan to Bolster News Coverage of State Government Nationwide

Project Supported by \$1.8 Million Grant from the Open Society Foundations

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NEW YORK—In response to the dramatic decline in news coverage of America's legislatures, National Public Radio kicked off a project today that will provide in-depth reporting on government actions in all 50 states. The initiative, supported by a \$1.8 million grant from the Open Society Foundations, aims to bring greater transparency and accountability to the workings of state capitals across the country.

"A strong democracy requires a diverse, independent, and highly functioning watchdog press to help people hold the government and private sector accountable," said [Ann Beeson](#), executive director of U.S. Programs at the Open Society Foundations. "The dramatic decline in news coverage at the state level has left millions of people significantly less informed about what is happening in their own backyards. We are confident that NPR, its member stations, and partners can help fill that void with much needed in-depth and analytical reporting for communities of every size in every corner of the country."

NPR's new project, called Impact of Government, will build on the best of local and state reporting at nearly 800 NPR member stations across the country – adding reporters, editors, and analysts in every state. It significantly augments the work of existing public radio reporters that cover the statehouse and related issues – ultimately adding at least 100 journalists to strengthen public radio's service to local communities with reporting on-air and online.

"NPR and our member stations are better positioned than any other news network to look at the effect that state government has on local communities," said Vivian Schiller, NPR president and CEO. "This initiative will provide the public not just with information, but with the context they need to hold local governments to a higher level of accountability. Our network provides a perfect vehicle for cross-state, cross-region, and national analyses of the most critical issues facing our country."

The grant from the Open Society Foundations supports the planning and the beginning of the year-long pilot phase with station partners in eight states.

NPR is currently inviting member stations to submit applications for the pilot projects and has posted staff positions for the initiative. The pilot stations will be selected by the end of December 2010 and begin work in March 2011. After the first year, NPR will phase in an additional 17 states, bringing the number of legislatures covered by the initiative to 25. Eventually, the initiative will cover every legislature in the country.

Impact of Government is the latest in a series of NPR initiatives to bolster the relevance and reporting capacity of public radio across the country.

Active in more than 70 countries, the Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their citizens. Working with local communities, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression, and access to public health and education.

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