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NPR ANNOUNCES "IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT"

MAJOR JOURNALISM INITIATIVE WILL CREATE A NETWORK OF STATION-BASED JOURNALISTS DEDICATED TO COVERING THE EFFECT OF GOVERNMENT ACTIONS IN EVERY STATE

PROJECT LAUNCHES WITH \$1.8 MILLION GRANT FROM THE OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

NPR announced the kick-off of Impact of Government, an ambitious local-national journalism initiative that will add editorial resources and reporters to NPR member stations in all 50 states, to better inform the public about the impact that the actions of state governments has on citizens and communities. The new initiative, which begins its pilot phase in March 2011, is launching with a \$1.8 million grant from the Open Society Foundations.

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 to take a deeper and more comprehensive look at the role of state government from a local, regional and national perspective. 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 & 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 \$1.8 million Open Society Foundations grant supports the planning and the beginning of the year-long pilot phase with station partners in eight states, allowing NPR to staff a new team of editors and data-analysts to run the project.

"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."

At its core, Impact of Government will enhance service to public media's growing audience of 34 million radio listeners, and millions more online and on mobile, by focusing on governmental decisions and issues that have the greatest impact, such as health care, taxes, crime, immigration, the environment and jobs. Rather than covering the process of government as is typically the case with statehouse reporting, Impact of Government will help public radio stations develop "hubs" for reporting on issues critical to their region or state. NPR will serve as a central editorial and technical resource, enabling stations in every state to work collaboratively with NPR, each other and with other partners to develop stories and share content on common issues, and identify national trends. All coverage produced by Impact of Government will be multiplatform.

NPR is currently inviting member stations to submit applications for the eight, year-long pilot projects, and has posted four staff positions for its new Impact of Government desk. The pilot stations will be selected by the end of December, and begin work in March 2011. After one year, NPR will phase in an additional 17 states, bringing the number of partner hubs to 25, and eventually to every state in the country.

A distinguishing feature of Impact of Government is the innovative approach to fundraising. NPR is actively seeking additional funding for the overall initiative, and will work collaboratively with partner stations to seek local and regional matching funds from foundations and individual donors.

Open Society Foundations is the latest major funder to support NPR initiatives aimed at building the relevance and reporting capacity of public radio across all platforms at both the national and local level.

OSF's support for Impact of Government builds on earlier contributions by The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), which jointly funded the first phase of the [Argo network](#). Knight previously made possible intensive multiplatform training at NPR, and CPB is supporting the planning phase of the [Public Media Platform](#), a digital distribution network to serve all public media via a common infrastructure. Each of these projects sets the stage for the ambitious and broad scope of Impact of Government.

NPR is an award-winning, multimedia news organization and an influential force in American life. In collaboration with more than 900 independent public radio stations nationwide, NPR strives to create a more informed public – one challenged and invigorated by a deeper understanding and appreciation of events, ideas and cultures.

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