

Mike Nichols: What is the rationale for state taxpayer funding of public stations/public media when there are so many other for-profit and non-profit media entities?

Marta Bechtol: The work and scope of the Educational Communications Board is legally directed by this state statute: <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/statutes/statutes/39/i/11>.

State funding is essential to the public service that PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio provides to Wisconsin residents in communities across the state. It underpins our balanced public-private partnership of funding sources — along with federal funds from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and individual and business support — and is vital for supporting access to news and information, educational resources and emergency alert services in a largely rural state. The state's investment in public broadcasting allows us to provide essential service to areas of the state where there is no other broadcast choice and where broadband is very limited, with no cost and no paywall. Through careful stewardship of all of our funding, public media provides important and unique service to our state that no other media outlet or organization does.

Public media **protects** Wisconsin with emergency and weather alerts.

Public media serves as the primary broadcast relay for the statewide Emergency Alert System. Our networks provide PBS WARN (Warning, Alert, Response Network) service to the state, which ensures uninterrupted distribution of Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) from local, state, and national governments. When disruptions or cybersecurity events occur at carrier facilities, PBS WARN provides an immediate alternate source of inbound WEA messages. We partner with local emergency responders and state and federal public safety entities to ensure the efficient use of public communications infrastructure.

Public media **educates** children in Wisconsin.

Public media supports and strengthens education for all children, families and educators in Wisconsin, providing research-based standards-aligned educational materials and professional development opportunities created in collaboration with Wisconsin educators. These materials are available for free to all educators in all learning environments — public schools, private schools and homeschools. Public television's non-commercial educational programming is proven to prepare children for success in school. PBS KIDS programs are watched more than 4 million times in Wisconsin each month and are trusted by families across our state.

Public media **connects** Wisconsinites to the story of our state.

For more than 100 years, public media has upheld a deep commitment to serve Wisconsin through PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio — the only locally managed statewide media services in Wisconsin. We produce Wisconsin focused-content and our unbiased, fact-based, public service journalism helps Wisconsin residents stay informed about their communities.

As just one example of this kind of work in our communities, PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio led a coalition of hundreds of Wisconsin partners to record, preserve and celebrate the stories and experiences of Wisconsin veterans of World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam War. Together we also created LZ Lambeau: Welcoming Home Wisconsin's Vietnam Veterans, Wisconsin's official thank you and welcome home for Wisconsin's Vietnam veterans and a lasting traveling photo exhibit of all of Wisconsin's veterans who were killed in action or are still missing in action from Vietnam.