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WTJX Braces for \$1.3M Federal Cut, Freezes Hiring, and Halts Parade Coverage Pending Funding

Facing a potential \$1.3 million federal funding loss, WTJX has frozen hiring and paused carnival parade broadcasts after receiving no Tourism support, prompting senators to propose a budget line item to preserve the tradition and ensure continued coverage

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A WTJX camera setup prepares to capture the St. Thomas Carnival festivities in May, showcasing the station's longtime role in broadcasting Virgin Islands culture. By. WTJX

WTJX, the Virgin Islands' public broadcasting station, is bracing for the possibility of losing \$1.3 million in federal funding—approximately 18% of its budget—due to a proposed rescission in Congress that would claw back appropriated funds for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting

(CPB).

According to Tanya Singh, chief executive officer of the Public Television System, the Rescissions Act of 2025—passed by the House of Representatives on June 12—targets CPB allocations for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. The bill [advanced in the Senate](#) on Tuesday after Vice President JD Vance provided the tie-breaking vote, and is expected to face another tough vote in the House of Representatives.

“Until we know if our federal funding through CPB will be clawed back, and what the impact would be if it is, we have implemented a hiring freeze,” Ms. Singh testified before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance. “I don't want to say destroy, but it would have a catastrophic effect on public media nationwide,” she told Senator Novelle Francis.

Lawmakers responded with concern. “I know \$1.3 million is a big hit, and for us to find \$1.3 million is going to be a challenge too,” said Senator Hubert Frederick. Senator Carla Joseph called the situation “disheartening,” while Senator Kurt Vialet commented, “It's really sad that so many areas of importance are being cut, from research to educational programs.”



WTJX CEO Tanya Marie-Singh (Credit: V.I. Legislature)

Efforts to protect public broadcasting are underway on a national level, with National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service leading the lobbying effort. Locally, Ms. Singh noted, “The Governor did write a letter to President Trump, and the delegate did sign a letter that was circulated in the House supporting PBS and NPR public media.” Senator Francis suggested the Legislature follow suit by “put[ting] our position on record.”

Alongside the threat of federal funding loss, WTJX announced it would cease broadcasting carnival parades across the territory due to the lack of financial support from the Department of Tourism. Without a line item or alternative funding source, the station will no longer air events such as the St. John Celebration or other island carnivals—a tradition it has upheld since 1975.

“In a letter to Tourism Commissioner Joseph Boschulte, I advised him that WTJX can no longer fund the cost of the parades, and as a consequence, we would no longer broadcast any of the parades,” Ms. Singh testified. “I advised him that our attempts to solicit funding from Tourism went unanswered, and just like my team solicitation attempts, my letter also went unanswered.”

She said she believes the letter was received. “It is my distinct understanding that the Tourism Department subsequently solicited and paid an entity to stream the parade,” Ms. Singh said, noting that WTJX was the “first to stream the parades live on social media.”

Without financial backing, future broadcasts will not take place. WTJX approached Tourism for support after finding itself “locked out” of private sponsorship, with most businesses already committed to other elements of the celebrations. “I feel that the Tourism Department funds other people, and it's a slap in the face,” Ms. Singh said.

Lawmakers appeared unified in their disapproval. “That's pennies. I can't see why the Tourism Department didn't respond and answer,” Senator Franklin Johnson said after learning that broadcasting all five parades—including both children's and adult events—would cost around \$90,000. Ms. Singh attributed the lack of support to a lack of appreciation for WTJX's role. “Apparently they don't appreciate us or the internal audience, because we're the only broadcasting station, so you're not respecting what we bring to the table as a television station.”

Sen. Francis called for a closer review of the issue, stating, “We'll have to take a real comprehensive look at this situation and make an informed decision,” including the possibility of placing a line item in the budget to cover carnival broadcasts.

Senator Marvin Blyden supported the idea. “That's part of our culture, our history. It goes in our archives. Documentation is critical, and I think it's unfortunate that folks do not respond,” he said. He added, “\$90,000 for five parades. I think that's reasonable, in my opinion.”

Senator Milton Potter shared his disappointment. “I, too, was very frustrated with the fact that WTJX was not broadcasting the St. John parade. I was stunned,” he said. Potter also floated the idea of a cross-agency memorandum of understanding to prevent future breakdowns in communication.

Senator Violet, however, proposed a more direct route. “We don't need an MOU. We don't need anything. We just need to include it in the budget, directly out of the Tourism [Advertising] Revolving Fund, and we have the opportunity to air all the parades,” he stated. “The Division of [Festivals] pays one artist from Trinidad, at times, more than \$90,000.”

The Public Television System's FY2026 budget request totals \$4,431,902—the same amount as the previous year. “It's not sufficient to cover all of our expenses,” WTJX officials stated. “You really should ask for what you need,” Senator Potter advised.