

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1604

June 1, 2016

Jarl Mohn
President and CEO
National Public Radio
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Washington, DC 20002

Mr. Mohn:

Recent media reports and subsequent disclosures by National Public Radio (NPR) have raised questions about the nature of your organization's reporting on the United States' nuclear deal with Iran and its relationship to both outside advocacy organizations and the Obama administration. NPR's reporting on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) did a disservice to the American people by failing to provide robust, impartial coverage of one of the most important foreign policy questions of the last decade. NPR still owes its listeners and funders a complete and serious explanation of its failures.

The stated mission of NPR is "to create a more informed public – one challenged and invigorated by a deeper understanding and appreciation of events, ideas and cultures," accomplished by distributing "programming that meets the highest standards of public service in journalism." As was clear to those who followed the issue, NPR did not ask the hard questions about the deal. Instead, it preferred to feature its donors and "experts" who generally shared the same pro-JCPOA viewpoint. Even some NPR staff have now acknowledged that, in several instances, the organization did not adhere to its own standards of journalism and ethics.

Beyond NPR's particular and well documented failures, it appears they occurred within a media ecosystem specifically created to sell the President's Iran policy. Members of the Obama administration have admitted that they used media organizations, reporters, and non-profit groups, including the Ploughshares Fund, as an "echo chamber" in order to sell the nuclear deal with Iran. By creating fanciful narratives, villainizing critics, and glossing over facts, President Obama, the Iranians, and their willing accomplices played the American people. Sadly, as NPR's financial records show, it appears American public radio was one of those accomplices.

After the May 20, 2016 Associated Press (AP) story exposed this scandal, the NPR ombudsman announced that she was looking into the matter; an appropriate first step. The ombudsman, Elizabeth Jensen, is tasked with serving "as an independent voice on questions raised by listeners and readers of news broadcasts published by NPR." However, an investigation that was conducted in a matter of days, without contacting my office, or outside experts, raises serious questions about the integrity of that process. Particularly when taxpayers support this news organization, there is additional burden of responsibility that falls on NPR, beyond its ethical, moral, and journalistic duties.

Therefore, I believe it is necessary that you appoint an independent investigator to conduct an intensive review into the arrangement between the Ploughshares Fund and NPR as it relates to NPR's reporting on President Obama's deal with Iran. I trust this investigation will recommend substantive improvements to NPR's reporting process and additional safeguards that can be put in place so that we do not see a repeat of this situation in the future.

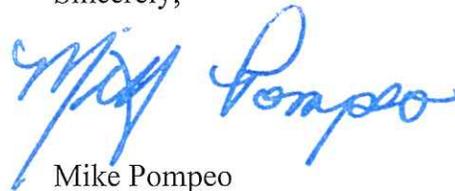
While the Ombudsman's Report found NPR's "disclosure processes broke down," there are several outstanding issues that the Report did not explain that this independent investigator must examine. They include:

- Why the \$100,000 donation to NPR by the Ploughshares Fund was not disclosed when the organization's President, Joseph Cirincione, appeared on NPR in a show entitled "Nuclear Experts Remain Optimistic about Iranian Negotiations" on March 23, 2015?
- Why there was not an editorial note on the transcript of this show noting the disclosure omission and explaining Ploughshares' support of NPR? A note was added more than a year after the airing of the show on May 20, 2016, the date of the AP story.
- Why did NPR lie to the AP initially about my multiple communications with them regarding interviews, saying they had "no record of my requests," then following up in later stories that "the interview did not take place," and finally admitting to the truth in the ombudsman report that NPR "canceled" my interview? This gets to the larger issue of why NPR denied me, and others that shared my views, an opportunity to present a balancing viewpoint on the Iran deal.
- The underlying ethical issues connected to NPR's taxpayer financing and its willingness to serve the interests of one political party and its allies on the most important foreign policy legacy of that same party's president.

While issues of bias are not new in regards to NPR's reporting, these current allegations, involving \$700,000 in financial contributions from the Ploughshares Fund to NPR over the past several years, cannot be ignored. Further, the implications of how President Obama's deal with Iran was sold to the American people are quite damning.

NPR has the opportunity to acknowledge its missteps in a serious way and apologize to the American public for the disservice done to them. I hope you do not pass on this opportunity.

Sincerely,



Mike Pompeo
Member of Congress