

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2104

July 14, 2020

The Honorable Michael Pack
Chief Executive Officer
U.S. Agency for Global Media
330 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20237

Dear Mr. Pack:

I write with serious concerns regarding your capability to lead the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM) as its CEO. USAGM is intended to be an independent agency with a mission to “provide unbiased news and information in countries where the press is restricted.” Since taking office, you have undertaken sweeping changes that call into question USAGM’s status as an independent news organization with the apparent goal of advancing the partisan interests of the Trump Administration. I call on you to resign from your position immediately.

Within days of assuming office, you removed the chiefs of four of the news organizations operating within your agency: Middle East Broadcasting, Radio Free Asia, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and the Open Technology Fund. In addition, you removed the members of the bipartisan advisory boards and replaced them with conservative operatives, including five political appointees of the Trump administration. You appointed a Republican state politician with no apparent relevant experience to lead the Open Technology Fund, which promotes internet freedom around the world. For decades, these organizations have served behind a firewall that has shielded them from political interference from government officials. Never has this firewall been more at threat than it is today under your leadership.


More recently, your office has indicated that dozens of foreign journalists employed at Voice of America (VOA) may not have their J-1 visas renewed. As you know, the J-1 visa allows foreign citizens to temporarily work in the United States in ways that promote cultural exchanges. In addition to the journalistic loss which would result, it continues in the Administration’s insidious pattern of undermining the work visa program. Thus far, a total of at least ten journalists working for VOA have been informed they will not have their visas renewed. According to a report by VOA, other journalists have only “a few weeks left before they could be forced to return to their home countries, where some fear retribution because of VOA’s reporting.” As Matt Armstrong, a former Republican appointee to the Broadcasting Board of Governors states, “Failing to renew (visas) may result in harsh penalties for some of these reporters and their families, from jail to even death.”

Questions regarding your ability to lead USAGM are not new. In fact, your nomination was pending for nearly two years due in large part to legitimate concerns of self-enrichment after it was reported that at least \$1.6 million from your non-profit, Public Media Lab, went to your company, Manifold Productions. You furthermore failed to provide the U.S. Senate with

information regarding this serious matter after it was requested from you. As you know, this issue is currently the subject of an ongoing investigation by the D.C. Attorney General.

During your confirmation hearing, you asserted, “The whole agency rests on the belief the reporters are independent, that no political influence is telling them how to report the news and what to say.” As CEO, you have failed to uphold the independence with which USAGM and its networks rely out of a clear desire to advance the partisan interests of the Trump Administration. I reiterate my call for you to resign immediately.

Sincerely,



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress