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# Dayton Daily News

TRUSTED SINCE 1898

May 14, 2025

**VOICES: Silencing the Voice of America would hurt Butler County's legacy**

By Robert Weiner and Khel Gordhan



Robert Weiner



Khel Gordhan



The Bethany Relay Station in Butler County has a major historic role as the first Voice of America (VOA) station in the country combating propaganda from Nazi Germany and assuring factual, American-based news information as a beacon to the world. (Via Travel Butler County)

## [Ideas & Voices](#)

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The Bethany Relay Station in Butler County has a major historic role as the first Voice of America (VOA) station in the country combating propaganda from Nazi Germany and assuring factual, American-based news information as a beacon to the world. The Administration's proposed cuts and silencing of the Voice of America, with Butler County's legacy, would be a tragedy.

While the Bethany Relay Station is now a museum, the VOA has remained a crucial source for reliable information on American democratic efforts abroad for people living under repressive governments.

Cutting out this incredible program, along with attempting to massively cut Radio Free Europe (RFE), only serves to embolden Russian aggression in Ukraine. While a lawsuit by VOA staffers has now held the line to protect the VOA from Trump's cuts, the fight for a free and fair press is far from over. It's clear that within this chaos, America's enemies are cheering.

Pushback to Trump's decisions is loud and growing. On April 1, the Press Freedom Center at the National Press Club [hosted](#) a conference on the state of the recent lawsuit to roll back the shutdown of the VOA and RFE. The room was packed with reporters with print and radio-TV journalists expressing support for their VOA colleagues. The panel, including David Seide, lead counsel of the lawsuit, stressed the importance of the VOA and its ability to reach people around the world. These words would not fall on deaf ears, as Royce Lamberth, senior judge of the DC District Court, on April 22 [ordered](#) the Trump administration to restore the congressional creation, funding, and jobs for Voice of America.

On the March 18, Alexander Dugin, a prominent Russian voice in favor of Putin's intervention, [told](#) CNN: "He is in favor of patriotism of the nation, and I define that as the Great Powers' World Order. Putin and Trump coincide in accepting this model."

Since the creation of the Bethany Relay Station, the VOA has [grown](#) to reach a global audience of 326 million people each week with programming in 48 languages. It is an essential platform for factual information to combat propaganda from repressive governments.

The VOA has long been decried by Putin's Russia as simply American propaganda. So when the Trump administration cut funding for VOA on March 13 [to](#) "ensure taxpayers are no longer on the hook for radical propaganda," Russian propagandists cheered. Margarita Simonyan, editor-in-chief for the Kremlin-backed RT network and Rossiya Segodnya news agency, applauded the news, [saying](#), "Today is a holiday for me and my colleagues at RT and Sputnik. This is an awesome decision by Trump!"

The National Press Club had a very different response to the cuts, announcing in a [statement](#) on March 15 that "Removing large numbers of its journalists at the same time as dismantling the United States Agency for Global Media threatens the very foundation that has allowed VOA to operate without political interference." Given these developments, citizens of Butler County, Ohio, should be especially concerned about the legacy of the VOA.

Another notable voice for truth, Radio Free Europe (RFE), founded in 1950 to combat Soviet propaganda, is also under threat by the Trump administration. The RFE has been an especially sharp thorn in Russia's side as, through the stream of factual reports of Russian war crimes and important events, Russia's ability to control the narrative by promoting its propaganda to the eastern European countries is severely hampered. As described [by](#) Simonyan, "They spread their tentacles across Russian regions like an octopus and brainwash our compatriots." Considering this, Trump's move to cut funding to the RFE will only serve to embolden Russian propagandists. While a federal judge on March 25 [ordered](#) the freeze to stop, Trump officials have been [sluggish](#) in their compliance with this order. The USAGM has even effectively [exhorted](#) the RFE, offering funding for April in exchange for control over their board of directors.

However, the fight is far from over. The White House will likely appeal the latest court decision. Even if the appeal is denied, Trump will still try to tamper with the organizations in other ways. There's no reason why Trump wouldn't use USAGM, the parent agency, to further pressure the VOA into bending the knee.

Ultimately, these cases about the VOA, RFE, and programs that track thousands of Ukrainian children, [also](#) targeted for funding removal, reveal that Trump's actions at every turn have undermined America's ability to negotiate with Russia and improve relations with America's allies. Butler County, the Bethany Relay Station's legacy, and Voice of America deserve better.

*Robert Weiner is a former spokesman in the Clinton and Bush White Houses and senior staff for Congressmen John Conyers, Charles Rangel, Claude Pepper, Ed Koch, Sen. Ted Kennedy, and 4-Star Gen. Barry McCaffrey.*

*Khel Gordhan is senior policy analyst at Robert Weiner Associates and Solutions For Change Foundation.*