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October 20, 2008

The Broadcasting Board of Governors
330 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20237

Governor Edward Kaufman
Governor Joaquin Blaya
Governor Blanquita Cullum
Governor Jeffrey Hirschberg
Governor Steven Simmons

Dear Governors:

We are writing to urge you to consider ways of retaining strategically vital radio services of the Voice of America to Russia and neighboring countries as the Kremlin cracks down on its own independent media and becomes increasingly anti-American in tone.

Specifically, we respectfully request that at your October monthly meeting, that you:

- 1) Restore the VOA Russian direct radio shortwave broadcasts that ceased last July 26, a dozen days before Russia's invasion of Georgia.
- 2) Extend VOA Ukrainian radio broadcasts beyond their scheduled expiration date of December 31, 2008.
- 3) Reconfirm your decision of last August 8 to enhance and retain for the foreseeable future the VOA Georgian radio service.

We believe these actions would correspond to U.S. interests. Freedom of the media in Russia, especially on the airwaves, has been cut to the point that it is extremely difficult for people to hear views other than those espoused by the Kremlin. The Russian invasion of Georgia, which has led to a further deterioration of U.S.-Russian relations, has only exacerbated a situation which was already troubling and shows little if any prospect of improvement.

The Broadcasting Board of Governors

October 20, 2008

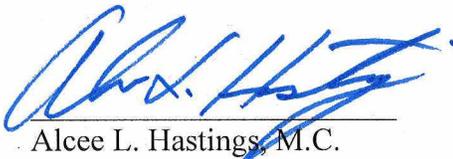
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As for the Ukrainian and Georgian services, we believe that it would be premature to close them down. Given Russia's aggressiveness, fears that Moscow might be planning to target Ukraine, and the volatility of Ukrainian politics, VOA's radio broadcasts would provide a stable source of impartial information through what may be difficult times ahead. Moreover, pluralism of opinion is not yet secure in Georgia, despite the other achievements of the Rose Revolution. The Georgian people can still benefit from hearing directly from VOA about international events, especially Washington's policies with respect to Georgia and other countries of the former USSR.

It is our understanding that funds exist to ensure the future of these services through September 30, 2010. The continuing resolution enacted by Congress (PL 110-329) and signed by President Bush on September 30 states that \$8 million may be made available this fiscal year and next for international broadcasting to Georgia, Russia and the region. The modest cost of restarting VOA Russian and retaining the VOA Georgian and Ukrainian services --- approximately half of the funds allocated --- would position U.S. international broadcasting to speak authoritatively to Russia at the onset of a new Administration and Congress.

We urge your prompt consideration of this proposal and formal notification of its acceptance to the appropriate committees in advance of the increasingly likely lame-duck session of Congress following the November 4 election.

Sincerely,



Alcee L. Hastings, M.C.
Chairman



Christopher H. Smith, M.C.
Ranking Minority Member

cc: The Honorable James Glassman, Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and
Public Affairs
Mr. Jeffrey Trimble, Executive Director, Broadcasting Board of Governors