

There exists in this nation a polarization problem, although this is news to no one. The onus of this divide is often thought to rest on media sources, which ostensibly drive people toward extremes. And although this is untrue for most established newspapers and radio stations, news outlets across the nation certainly can help cool the fever of polarity afflicting the American public. Due to a concoction of laws, customs, and mores, American media outlets are all but expected to be funded by corporations, lobbyists, or [billionaire philanthropists](#), frequently posing conflicts of interest for journalists, editors, and owners. Removing the influence of money from journalism—the best way to ensure neutral and accurate coverage—must be done in a multi-pronged attempt to cut through partisan noise.

If journalists want to accurately cover political beats, they must have a solid foundation of facts from which they can make explanations and comparisons. In modern America, [some politicians](#) ignore this standard set of empirical truths in order to present fringe ideologies as fashionable. To restore Americans' trust in their leaders, these officials must make a commitment to telling the truth. From there, journalists and political writers can accurately and fairly write about politics.

Another important way to ensure accurate and neutral media coverage is to remove “dark” money from elections and campaigns so that candidates aren't tempted to mislead the public. When funded by anonymous donors, political candidates may feel encouraged to utilize shady advertising and messaging tactics. By enforcing existing [federal guidelines](#) about campaign funding—including either publicly funded campaigns or a strict cap on campaign-related donations and expenditures—media outlets will not need to run biased ads between

segments of their hopefully unbiased regular coverage, and there will be no need to normalize extremist candidates and beliefs.

The last tool—and perhaps the most important—to ensure journalistic truth is to fund media sources publicly. Sources such as NPR and PBS—which receive federal funding—fill a crucial role in the American media landscape as trustworthy sources of fact-based reporting. The one potential downside to publicly funded institutions, especially under a volatile federal government, is a fear that controversial or anti-administration content will result in [funding cuts](#). This requires two solutions, both of which are necessary for any functioning free press. The first is a commitment from the government not to rescind, reduce, or suspend funding, press passes, or broadcasting licenses under any circumstances. This allows journalists to do their work without fear of censorship or retribution. Secondly, editorial boards and organizational leadership should be legally separated from any government officials. In tandem, these solutions will beget a deserved public trust in national media.

Candidates, journalists, and donors must all be held accountable for their influence on the beliefs of the American public. By adhering to ethical and financial best practices as outlined above, news sources will be able to cut through the partisan noise and deliver accurate, relevant, and politically grounded news to the American people.