

Support Protection of Wireless Microphones Used in the Performing Arts

From: The Honorable Louise McIntosh Slaughter & The Honorable Leonard Lance
Sent By: Jack Spasiano (jack.spasiano@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Slaughter
Michael Taggart (michael.taggart@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Lance
Date:

Dear Colleague:

As co-chairs of the Congressional Arts Caucus, we invite you to join us in sending the below letter to the FCC Chairman and Commissioners in support of protecting wireless microphones used in the performing arts.

The letter urges the Commission to preserve the quality and integrity of wireless microphones used in the performing arts as it works to implement spectrum auctions. The performing arts rely on this efficient and reliable technology and its importance to this sector should be recognized by the FCC.

The Commission ruled last year that performing arts entities regularly using 50 or more wireless devices would now be eligible to apply for a Part 74 license and would have access to a database which protects against interference. This decision protects some large events and performances against interference from White Space devices.

However, the Commission is currently considering making database registration unavailable to performing arts entities utilizing fewer than 50 devices on a regular basis. Unfortunately, this would leave major not-for-profit regional theatres, and our nation's symphony orchestras, opera companies, dance companies, presenting organizations and educational entities without interference protection against White Space devices.

There are more than 26,000 school theater programs in the United States which impact approximately 600,000 enrolled students. Performances by opera and dance companies, symphony orchestras, community theaters, and regional theaters reach a combined audience of 190 million Americans annually and collectively represent an annual \$7.8 billion industry. Given the thousands of performances held by arts organizations each year, the use of wireless microphones is both essential to producing high-quality performances and also mitigates against significant public safety concerns. Professional wireless capability, with interference protection that works successfully, is essential to the performing arts.

For 35 years, wireless microphone technology has allowed users unrestricted on-stage movement and helped to create sophisticated sound. Nonprofit performing arts organizations, commercial theaters, schools, and performers have all relied on this equipment operating within the "white space" radio frequencies between broadcast channels of the television band. Wireless systems are also integral to backstage communications used by stagehands to execute complex technical activity. Interference to these backstage communications could compromise the safety of performers, technicians, and audiences.

The American public wants and needs access to high-quality, safe performances. We urge you to join us in communicating with the FCC. **The deadline to sign onto the letter is COB, Thursday, May 21st.**

To sign onto the letter, please contact Jack Spasiano (jack.spasiano@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Slaughter and Michael Taggart (michael.taggart@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Lance.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter
Co-Chair, Congressional Arts Caucus

Leonard Lance
Co-Chair, Congressional Arts Caucus

[DATE]

Chairman Tom Wheeler
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner Ajit Pai
Commissioner Michael O'Rielly
c/o Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: ET Docket No. 14-165 and GN Docket Nos. 12-268 and 14-166

Dear Chairman Wheeler, Commissioner Clyburn, Commissioner Rosenworcel,
Commissioner Pai, Commissioner O'Rielly and Ms. Dortch:

As the Commission works to implement spectrum auctions, we write to stress the importance of wireless microphones to the performing arts which rely on this efficient and reliable technology. The Commission ruled last year that performing arts entities regularly using 50 or more wireless devices would now be eligible to apply for a Part 74 license and would have access to a database which protects against interference. This decision was a move in the right direction and protects some large events and performances against interference from White Space devices.

The Commission is currently considering making database registration unavailable to performing arts entities utilizing fewer than 50 devices on a regular basis. Unfortunately, this would leave major not-for-profit regional theatres, and our nation's symphony orchestras, opera companies, dance companies, presenting organizations and educational entities without interference protection against White Space devices. We urge that the Commission's final rules preserve the quality and integrity of wireless microphones used in the performing arts. As you develop the spectrum rules, we hope you will keep in mind the following sectors that depend heavily on wireless microphones:

- **Live Performing Arts Events:** Performing arts venues rely on wireless microphones to transmit crystal-clear songs and dialogue to the audience. Because wireless microphones are small, they can be unobtrusively hidden in performers' costumes. Wireless devices are also used backstage by stagehands to govern the operations of a production. They mitigate safety hazards and protect performers, stagehands and audiences from harm. Also, hearing-impaired patrons may rely on listening devices that operate in White Space. For these reasons, many large venues have invested in dozens of wireless microphones. For instance, the Shakespeare Theatre Company uses approximately 30 wireless microphones and instruments for a single performance.
- **Music industry:** From Nashville to Las Vegas, from large arenas to small clubs, wireless microphones are vital to musical artists in the creation and presentation of music. Wireless microphones are ubiquitous in the music industry and make both concerts and studio sessions possible. Any FCC decision that impaired the ability of the music industry to use wireless microphones would hurt artists, the record companies, venue operators, and fans.

Further, the Commission already ordered that wireless microphone operations vacate the 700 MHz band of the broadcast spectrum in 2010. To comply, many of these not-for-profit institutions made considerable investments to replace their sound equipment. If the Commission seeks to move the wireless operations of these

entities again, we urge the Commission to offer as much transition time as possible and seek to minimize the financial impact on not-for-profit professional and educational entities.

The Commission has already eliminated the two designated channels it had previously set aside for wireless microphones – an action that will increase the likelihood of interference for wireless microphone users. Now, the only remaining interference protection mechanism is registration in the database – denying access to professional not-for-profit and educational performing arts institutions would leave these entities vulnerable to interference and unable to properly serve the public. This decision would be harmful both to the performing arts and to new White Space devices. Interference protection would serve to protect both of these industries.

In light of the overwhelming benefits of wireless microphones, the decreased available spectrum, and the increased potential of interference, we urge you to retain the ability of wireless microphones in the performing arts to register in the database.

Thank you for considering this matter, and we look forward to working with you to promote the development and use of vital communication technologies such as wireless microphones.

Sincerely,

Louise M. Slaughter
Co-Chair of the Congressional Arts Caucus
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance
Co-Chair of the Congressional Arts Caucus
Member of Congress