

National Black Church Initiative

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February 25, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi:

The internationally-owned record labels are lobbying Congress to mandate that local radio stations pay a new performance fee to the recording industry for music aired for free on the radio. The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a coalition of 34,000 representing church- and minority-owned radio broadcasters, asks that you oppose this legislation.

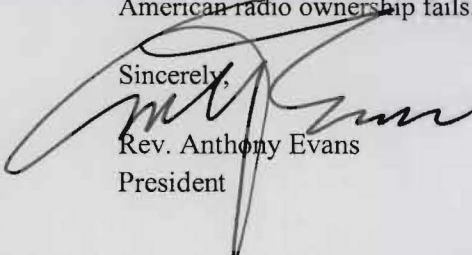
We believe that passage of H.R. 848, the "Performance Rights Act," would disproportionately harm minority radio broadcasters. Only four percent of radio stations are owned by African-Americans, and this performance royalties tax will make it even more difficult for minorities and minority churches to maintain their current stations and/or acquire broadcast properties in the future. By making stations even more unaffordable, this legislation would put the dream of ownership further out of reach for African-American entrepreneurs trying to enter the radio industry.

This is the worst time to impose additional fees on minority-owned radio stations that are already dealing with layoffs, salary cuts and sinking revenues anywhere between 10 – 50 percent under the current economic crisis. Even though local radio stations provide free airtime worth billions of dollars to promote performers and their music, the labels want more.

Minority-owned and church-owned radio stations speak directly to our communities, often carry our Sunday morning church service broadcasts, and are a cherished resource to our communities and culture that must be nurtured and protected. Silencing our voices on the airwaves when African-Americans are already underrepresented could be an unintended consequence if this legislation were allowed to pass.

In the interest of protecting local communities across the nation, we urge you to oppose this bill and protect the African-American and religious radio broadcasting community. Local radio stations are not only businesses, but vital lifelines to the people and local communities they serve. We cannot ignore the important role local radio plays in helping to shape the message to and image of the African-American community. If African-American radio ownership fails, then that voice is gone for good.

Sincerely,


Rev. Anthony Evans
President