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As Congress Returns From Summer Recess, Artists Must Recommit To Raising Their Voices In Washington

BY SHEILA E. AND ALICE PEACOCK

We come from different backgrounds, different parts of the country and different musical styles. Yet something more striking than geography or genre unites us to each other—and to hundreds of artists around the country. We both have raised our voices in the halls of Congress urging policymakers to advance the rights of music creators. In fact, the creator's voice in recent years has become stronger, clearer and more influential. And as more of our colleagues join the chorus, we can amplify our voices even more in the coming year.

As elected leaders of the Recording Academy, we've often been told by the academy's Washington, D.C., representatives, "The best lobbyists for artists, songwriters and studio professionals are the music creators themselves." We have taken these words to heart as we each have testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee and attended countless meetings with policymakers about performance royalties.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. Music professionals from all walks of life have come to Washington to address far-reaching issues from copyright to use of the wireless spectrum to arts funding. And the results speak for themselves, for the recent 110th and 111th Congress brought the advance of important music policy, often after lobbying by music makers themselves. Bills that would have allowed interference to wireless microphones were defeated after artists and recording engineers explained the threat to live concerts. Arts practitioners successfully lobbied to have \$50 million of the stimulus bill allocated to the arts industry. And the Prioritizing Resources and Organization for Intellectual Property Act enhanced copyright enforcement and created a cabinet-level "copyright czar" position.

But perhaps most impressive is the

FOR THE RECORD

Care Bears on Fire didn't perform with the Jonas Brothers when CBOF appeared July 23 at the Theatre of the Living Arts in Philadelphia to open for Honor Society. A photo caption in the Aug. 15 issue was unclear on this point.



PEACOCK



SHEILA E.

momentum of the Performance Rights Act, for which we both testified on Capitol Hill. As part of the musicFIRST Coalition, the academy and nearly a dozen other music organizations have assembled hearings, events and meetings to advocate for this important legislation. The bill now has bipartisan support, is co-sponsored by eight House committee chairmen, has been approved by the House Judiciary Committee and will soon be approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee. Artists have wanted a performance right for 80 years and because we're standing up, standing strong and standing together, we have achieved more in the past two years than previous efforts have in the past eight decades.

However, there's more work to be done. More artists, songwriters, producers and engineers will need to become effective lobbyists in order to move the performance rights legislation over the finish line. Additionally, we'll be facing tax issues, health policy and other copyright matters that affect all of our lives and livelihoods.

So what can each of us do?

Follow the issues: Become educated about music policy. Such publications as *Billboard* and the academy's *Capitol Tracks* (grammy.com/advocacy) offer news about how decisions in Washington affect the music community nationwide. Read music blogs, attend music town halls and join the Grammys on the Hill Facebook group. There are numerous ways to stay informed.

Make Capitol Hill a stop on your tour: Many of us route our tours through the Washington market. If you can spare an

hour, visit with your local representative. Representatives or their staff will want to meet you and hear your perspective. Remember, you're their boss.

Attend Grammys on the Hill in Washington: If you're an academy member, consider joining Washington's largest annual music community advocacy day. In April, hundreds of music professionals will descend on Capitol Hill to advance music policy. Be part of this historic movement to advance the rights of music creators.

Testifying before the Senate was an experience neither of us will ever forget. As the senators sat high on the dais, with the echoes of countless cameras documenting our every move, we couldn't help but feel part of history. We also realized the important power that has been seized by recording professionals in recent years. Our opinion matters, our roles are appreciated, our views shape policy, and policymakers are listening.

Now is the time for all artists, songwriters, producers and engineers—from the up-and-coming to veterans and established professionals—to take advantage of our collective power. As we make our voices louder and stronger, we can affect policy that will benefit our community for years to come.

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