

Address by Neil Portnow
President/CEO of The Recording Academy
GRAMMYs on The Hill Awards, Washington, D.C.
April 2, 2014

Harmony. Unity. Parity.

Those three words make up the motto for our advocacy day tomorrow. But each of these three words has great meaning to everyone in this room: the music creators who have traveled from across the country to be here; the industry and trade association executives from Washington; and the legislators and their able staff.

Harmony is the exquisite blending of musical ideas, but it's also working together to find common ground.

Unity means we're all in this together. Instead of working just for our own interests, we join forces for the greater good.

Parity means equitable treatment. No matter what role we play, we should expect to be treated with basic fairness.

I offer these concepts this evening not just because they represent our advocacy theme for this year, but because they have great relevance to our own policy needs as music advocates.

The current session of Congress has produced important legislation that addresses key segments of our musical family. In February of this year, Congressman Doug Collins, along with Representatives Marsha Blackburn and Hakeem Jeffries, introduced the Songwriter Equity Act. The Recording Academy was proud to stand with our fellow songwriter representatives in support of this legislation. It corrects longstanding hurdles that keep rates artificially low for songwriters both in their mechanical and performance royalties. We thank these legislators for their foresight.

Earlier this year, before he left Congress, Rep. Mel Watt introduced the Fair Market Royalty Act, co-sponsored by Rep. Judy Chu. The Fair Market Royalty Act answers the broadcasters' feigned desire for the marketplace to resolve the

longstanding performance royalty issue. Mr. Watt and Dr. Chu understand that the marketplace can only work when both sides of a transaction have rights to their property. When confronted with the level playing field proposed by the legislation, the National Association of Broadcasters quickly objected and proved that their pro-marketplace rhetoric was hollow.

Other leading legislators such as Congressman Jerrold Nadler have put forth innovative proposals to deal with other music licensing issues, and in the coming months we expect new legislation dealing with these specific music issues.

These individual bills are important in that they shine a light on key constituents in the music industry and help educate members of Congress and the public on specific and important interests.

But “harmony, unity and parity” means that we take this one step further....

Next year, we’ll celebrate a decade of GRAMMYs on the Hill advocacy days — the music community’s only annual lobby day. The issues have varied over the years, but there is one consistent message we’ve heard from the hundreds of legislators we’ve visited: They want us to unite as an industry and present a unified vision for legislative change.

With the House Judiciary Committee under Chairman Goodlatte’s leadership engaged in a forward-thinking, comprehensive copyright review, now is the time for our community to be just as forward-thinking with a comprehensive music legislative proposal that addresses the needs of those who write the songs, those who perform them, and those who produce those recordings to create the music we love. We should make the case that a comprehensive music bill need not wait for the entire copyright act to be revised. As Congress’s own advisor on copyrights — register Maria Pallante — noted, quote: "Congress already has had more than a decade of debate on the public performance right for sound recordings, and has given serious consideration to improving the way in which musical works are licensed in the marketplace. These issues are ripe for resolution." end quote.

It is time for our industry to take the lead and craft a unified proposal for a music omnibus bill, or if you’ll indulge me, the MusicBus proposal.

Now I know that we may hear concerns from within our own industry about such a concept. And there are of course real questions. How can we find a way to work through the specific interests of labels, publishers, performing rights organizations and others to come to consensus? And even if we do, won't it be too big and too hard for Congress to pass it?

But imagine the political firepower of a united music industry — with artists, composers, producers and engineers all seeing their interests advance in one piece of legislation. We are an industry of the greatest communicators on the planet and together, we can drive the MusicBus to its ultimate destination — harmony, unity, and parity for all of our constituents.

For those that doubt the will of music people to create monumental achievements, I invite you to meet me at the GRAMMY Museum in L.A. I'll personally walk you through the exhibits noting the great visionaries of our industry who built great companies, developed amazing musical talents, and created new and innovative ways of bringing music to the public.

We need to be the next generation of visionaries who create a unified approach to the future of our business. For all the complexities of the MusicBus concept, its goal is actually so simple it could fit on a bumper sticker: "Fair market pay to all music creators across all platforms."

Here in Washington, we'll work within our industry to construct the framework for the concept of fair market payments for all creators. But like all great movements, this one must start at the grassroots level. So in the coming months, we will give our 22,000 members of The Recording Academy the tools they will need to move the concept forward from the ground up. We will take our successful GRAMMYs on the Hill initiative to the local level with a day of "GRAMMYs In My District," during which local advocates in diverse communities across the nation will bring music to their legislators' local offices and make the case for fairness for music creators.

Harmony, unity and parity are not always easy to achieve. But divisiveness, segmentation, and dissent will never lead to our success. Today, let us begin to work together for a comprehensive music omnibus proposal. We at The Recording Academy will commit to using all of the resources at our disposal. We hope others

will join us — and get on board the MusicBus. The journey and the destination will be that much more rewarding if we all take this ride together.

Enjoy the rest of this wonderful evening, and we hope to see many of you on the Hill tomorrow. Cheers....