

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

PROTECTING PERFORMING ARTS TECHNOLOGY

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Members of Congress to:

- **Instruct the FCC Chairman to preserve the ability of wireless microphones used in performing arts venues to operate without interference.**
- **Support legislation that would ensure adequate testing before permitting new devices and oppose legislation such as S. 234, S. 337 and H.R. 1597, that would allow unlicensed devices to threaten wireless microphone use.**

BACKGROUND

For the past 35 years, wireless microphone users, including Broadway theaters and nonprofit performance venues, museums, churches, schools, musicians, newscasters, and sportscasters have utilized equipment operating within the “white space” radio frequencies between broadcast channels of the television band (from 54 MHz to 698 MHz). The FCC recently commenced proceedings to consider the feasibility of immediately authorizing millions of unlicensed electronic devices, such as PDAs, cordless phones, and wireless laptops, to operate on these frequencies. However, doing so risks widespread radio interference to professional wireless microphone and audio systems, adversely affecting the ability of these systems to provide the high-quality performances that audiences have come to expect.

As the FCC works to develop the technical and operational rules to regulate new wireless devices, it must also strive to safeguard existing services, including wireless microphones, while committing to opening the spectrum to new uses. However, the relevant technical engineering issues are complex, requiring thorough and deliberate evaluation.

TALKING POINTS

- What is needed is a balance between promoting new electronic devices and preserving interference-free entertainment, sports, news, religious, and other productions like the one contained in a bill introduced by Congressman Bobby Rush (H.R. 1320), that sets forth a practical timeline for the approval of new devices. Much of the opposing legislation that seeks to speed the process to allow new devices does not include protection for wireless microphones.
- There would be no operable systems for hearing impaired theater patrons without wireless microphones. Since 1980, theaters have utilized infrared technology that operates with wireless microphones. Without these microphones, the infrared system would pick up music, but not dialogue and lyrics.
- Wireless microphone technology is commonly used in Broadway productions, as well as in performing arts venues across the country. This equipment has been used on stages for more than three decades, and has been continually refined to deliver a first-class sound environment. Since the early days of wireless microphones, this technology has freed performers from cumbersome microphone stands and other stationary mikes, allowing unrestricted movement and sophisticated sound. Wireless systems are also heavily utilized backstage for the two-way radios used by stagehands to communicate and execute complex technical activity.
- The impact on touring Broadway productions in 240 cities across North America—seen by more than 17 million theater-goers each year—would be devastating. Broadway theaters in New York attract 12 million theater-goers per year, support 45,000 full-time equivalent jobs, and generate an economic impact of \$4.8 billion—an industry that would be crippled without wireless capability.