

Testimony of Bob Regan
Songwriter
U.S. House of Representatives-Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection
Hearing on “Digital Content and Enabling Technology:
Satisfying the 21st Century Consumer”
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Mr. Chairman, and Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to speak today on behalf of songwriters. My name is Bob Regan. I am the current President of the Nashville Songwriters Association International, the largest not-for-profit trade association for songwriters in America.

I’ve heard it said that most writers really have only one story to tell...their own. With that in mind, I’d like to give some insight into the business and profession of song writing and into what content creation actually entails.

Forty years ago I sat in my bedroom with a Beatles songbook, my first guitar and my first broken heart. As I struggled to play the chords to “Norwegian Wood,” I experienced the healing, restorative powers of music, though I doubt I’d have put it that way at the time. In college, when I played “Louie Louie” at frat parties, I saw first hand the exuberance and release that a song could bring about. Think 20 Sig Eps doing the Gator. I witnessed songs like Bob Dylan’s “Blowing in the Wind” or Merle Haggard’s “Walking on the Fighting Side of Me” become far more than entertainment. They were anthems and battle cries that cut as deep as the rifts in society at that time.

Upon graduating, I decided to postpone applying to Law School for a year to try song writing and the music business full time. One year turned into five which became ten before I landed a recording contract with a major record label in Los Angeles. To that point, the songs I had written were of value only to friends, family and myself. They were performed at weddings; they commemorated the birth of my children and the passing of my parents. Was my recording debut a success? No, I was one of the large majority of recording artists who never make a dollar or make a second record.

At age 35, I gave myself three years to write a hit or pack it in. I moved my family across country to the songwriting capitol of the world, Nashville, TN.

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There, I was one of the lucky ones. I signed a contract as a staff writer for \$100 per week, to be repaid from future royalties. I had a few songs recorded and then, right at the three-year mark, Reba McIntire recorded and released a song which I had co-written. I finally had the hit and the validation that I had been working and praying for. Was I now wealthy? Well, I received around \$35,000 for my share of the royalties. Going forward, I became a co-publisher and co-owner of my copyrights.

Over the past two decades I have had many songs recorded and several of those have been hits on country radio. I have been blessed beyond all my expectations and have the greatest occupation anyone could ask for. Am I now wealthy? Hardly. If I'm lucky enough to co-write a song on a rare million selling CD, my writer's share is \$22,750. Congress, by the way, determines that rate.

The title of this hearing speaks to "Satisfying the 21st Century Consumer." We songwriters are more than willing, as we have always been, to provide content for new technologies. We welcome the opportunity. We are, however, opposed to business models that attempt to devalue our music, re-define how we are compensated or turn a radio signal into an on demand record store.

Others here can speak better than I to the specifics of pending legislation. As I said, I never did make it to Law School. I am, however, familiar with Article I Section 8 of the Constitution which gaurantees me the exclusive right to my creations. In addition common sense tells me that we need to have parity for all digital delivery platforms if any are to succeed and if we are all to reap the benefits of the digital age.

In closing, I may have only my own story to tell but it seems it has been the story of others as well. Who knows, maybe somewhere right now there's a kid in his bedroom with a guitar and a broken heart trying to play one of my songs. If that should lead him to embark on a career in music today, he will have many wonderful new outlets for his work. Let's value his creations fairly and give him the chance to tell the stories of the next generation.

Thank you for this opportunity.