

February 14, 2011

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
House Energy & Commerce Committee
2161 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Ranking Member
House E&C Committee
2204 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications & Technology
2182 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Comm. & Tech.
205 Cannon Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
2409 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
2426 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Goodlatte
Chairman
Subcommittee on IP, Competition & the Internet
2240 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Melvin Watt
Ranking Member
Subcomm. on IP, Competition & Int.
2304 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representatives,

We write to you today as members of the music community, and also as beneficiaries of the tremendous innovations made possible by the internet. Like so many Americans, we rely on the web for everything from keeping in touch with family and friends to watching cute animal videos on YouTube. Yet it is as creators that we experience the internet's greatest benefits.

It used to be that reaching audiences was a laborious and expensive proposition. To do much of anything as a musician, you needed the backing of big companies with considerable resources at their disposal. Then you had to navigate a complex system of gatekeepers before anyone even had a chance to hear your music. This meant that a lot of vital music — including uniquely American expressions like blues, bluegrass, jazz, gospel and rhythm & blues — fell by the wayside. By contrast, the internet lets artists from folk to rock to hip-hop and beyond pursue their entrepreneurial ambitions right alongside the larger players. We think this is great.

The story of the internet is filled with stories of enterprise and innovation, some of it disruptive. At the beginning of the last decade, many in the historic music industry

struggled to respond to these changes while failing to comprehend opportunities created by a networked world. As artists, we welcomed the chance to reach our fans directly and participate in what we hoped would become a legitimate digital music marketplace fueled by discovery and enterprise.

Although the transition hasn't been entirely smooth, we're starting to see what this marketplace looks like. This is in no small part due to policymakers on both sides of the aisle who understood that an environment of access and competition would result in truly amazing things. Who could have predicted the power of Twitter? The ubiquity of Facebook? The popularity of Pandora? We love these sites and services, and we know a lot of members of Congress do, too. It's safe to say that none of them would exist without an accessible platform for innovation.

Yet there is the very real possibility that without clear, enforceable and transparent rules, Internet Service Providers will favor their own products at the expense of other entrepreneurial activity — not to mention free expression. This is why we've gone on record in support of such clear, enforceable and transparent rules. There is a range of opinions about exactly what those rules should look like, but it is pretty clear to those of us who depend on the internet to manage our businesses that some basic rules are needed.

We think that Congress should take steps to preserve the internet as an engine for innovation and growth. We also believe that the FCC has a role to play in this time of tremendous technological development. For this reason, we strongly feel that eliminating the FCC's ability to issue basic rules is not in the best interest of America or its creative entrepreneurs.

Sincerely,

R.E.M.
Rebecca Gates
Kronos Quartet
Jill Sobule
Erin McKeown
Thao Nguyen
Alex Shapiro
Charles Bissell

cc:

The Honorable John Boehner
The Honorable Eric Cantor
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
The Honorable Steny Hoyer
The Honorable James Clyburn