

COMMUNICATIONS ISSUES OF CONCERN

PUBLIC BROADCASTING & 'WHITE SPACES'

Support Public Broadcasting

The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) is a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967 to promote noncommercial public telecommunications. In the authorizing language, Congress acknowledged public broadcasting's role in transmitting arts and culture: "It is in the public interest to encourage the growth and development of public radio and television broadcasting, including the use of such media for instructional, educational, and cultural purposes."

CPB does not produce or broadcast programs; it awards grants to public broadcasting stations, independent producers, and program development and production organizations such as NPR, PBS, American Public Media, the National Minority Consortia, and Public Radio International (PRI). CPB distributes roughly \$387 million in federal funds annually to PBS, NPR, and hundreds of public radio and TV stations across the country.

CPB is the largest single source of funding for public television and radio programming. In 2007, federal spending for public broadcasting was approximately \$1.54 per person in the United States. However, the average public television station receives only a fraction of its revenue from CPB. Public broadcasters raise 85 percent of their revenue from non-federal sources.

Public television and radio stations are often the only source of broadcast arts programming in many rural parts of the country. More than 80 million Americans view public television and more than 27 million listen to public radio for programming that covers public affairs, science, history, and the arts.

Public television airs arts programming that is not available on commercial television. There is widespread understanding that public television exists to provide what the market does, or can, not.

Protect 'White Spaces' for the Performing Arts

References to wireless audio devices used by the performing arts include: microphones, intercoms, in-ear monitors, certain walkie talkies, and or cueing/IFB systems. (The following does not refer to cellular phones, wireless data cards, LAN equipment, and other devices that don't operate in the "white space" spectrum like ticket verification and assisted listening equipment.)

Over the past 35 years, wireless audio devices used by the performing arts have operated on radio frequencies between the television broadcast channels, on the so-called "white spaces". Following the transition from analog to digital TV, television broadcasts will occupy less space within the TV band. Due to this transition, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) conducted proceedings to re-examine shared use of the re-allocated broadcast spectrum. This re-examination included consideration by the FCC to either auction off the white spaces to the highest bidder or to open the white spaces to millions of unlicensed electronic devices such as PDAs, cordless phones, and wireless laptops.

The performing arts community recognizes the benefits of greater access to the internet and encourages innovations that expand connectivity for underserved populations. At the same time, there is concern that shared use of the broadcast spectrum may open the door to increased 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. We urge the FCC to make sure that incumbent users' wireless microphone technology does not suffer interference.

Wireless microphone technology is commonly used in the performing arts, educational institutions, and Broadway productions 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.

We urge performing arts organizations to continue to educate their members of Congress about concerns for their wireless microphones and encourage the FCC to:

- conduct adequate testing of new devices to preserve the ability of wireless microphones used in performing arts venues to operate without interference.
- recognize the legitimate use of wireless microphones used in the performing arts.
- allow performing arts venues to be eligible for inclusion in a Geo-Location Database.