

May 6, 2009

The Honorable John Conyers  
Chairman  
House Judiciary Committee  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

RE: H.R. 848 -- Further Hearing Session on Royalties' Impact on Minority  
Broadcasting and Ownership Opportunities

Dear Chairman Conyers:

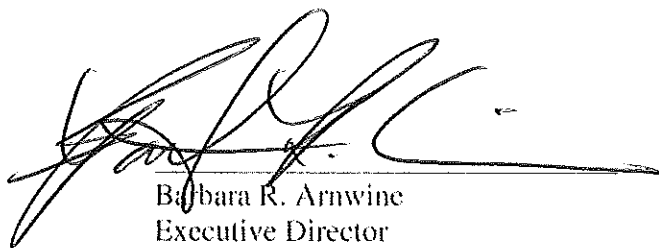
Minority radio broadcasters are of one voice in maintaining that passage of H.R. 848 would disproportionately harm minority broadcasters and their listening communities, and make it even more difficult for future aspiring minority owners to acquire broadcast properties. As civil rights advocates, we share these concerns. Minority owned radio stations speak directly to our communities and are a cherished resource that must be nurtured and protected. Therefore, we respectfully urge the Committee to conduct a thoughtful public hearing on the likely consequences this legislation would have on minority radio broadcast ownership and service to minority communities before any official Committee action is taken.

The Supreme Court has before it two significant voting rights cases this term. As you are aware, in *Bartlett v. Strickland*, No. 07-689 (March 9, 2009), the Supreme Court decided to limit the protections that are available under the Voting Rights Act in minority-influence districts. Still before the Court is *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District Number One v. Holder*, No. 08-322 (argued April 29, 2009). This is a frontal challenge to the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act itself. Should the Court strike down Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act - the Justice Department's main enforcement tool against discriminatory changes affecting elections - the chief remaining resource to ensure that African Americans can participate fully in the democratic process will be the continued engagement of minority radio broadcasters to drive turnout. However, passage of H.R. 848 would eviscerate this remaining, powerful resource. Minority communities will be ignored by elected officials, advances in civil rights progress will be rolled back, and future gains will be uncertain at best.

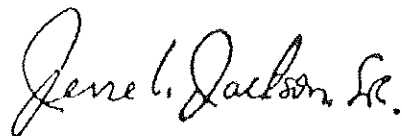
You have been and continue to be among the nation's leading proponents in the civil rights arena. We would be privileged to work with you as you develop a hearing that would be of the greatest value to the Committee as it examines these far-reaching unintended ramifications of H.R. 848.

With warmest regards,

Sincerely,



Barbara R. Arnwine  
Executive Director  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law



---

Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.  
Founder and President  
Rainbow PUSH Coalition