

STATEMENT OF REP. JOHN CONYERS, JR.
Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property Subcommittee
Hearing on “Copyright Office Views on Music Licensing Reform”
June 21, 2005

As I have stated before, I have serious reservations with proposals that limit the rights of content creators to negotiate a fair rate for their creativity.

I understand that there are broad proposals to revamp the music licensing system. Many of the proposals, however, appear to impact only the songwriters, the lowest-paid content owners there are. This process should not be thought of by anyone as an opportunity to extract further concessions from creators who already are the most heavily-regulated and restricted in the music industry.

Further, considering that all of the interested parties agree that the administration of the section 115 mechanical license should be streamlined, I believe that is where this Subcommittee should direct its energy. If we do that, we could pass a non-controversial bill very quickly. If, however, we pursue a broad approach that negatively impacts some groups in favor of others, it is likely that nothing will be accomplished except for alienating the actual creators of content.

Finally, we must retain the ability of songwriters to negotiate a fair rate for their musical content. While a rate court would appease some parties seeking a quick resolution to royalty disputes, private negotiations would be the most appropriate forum for such conversations.