

Collins strikes a chord with Music Modernization Act

by Todd Smith, Steve Gordon, & Jesse Weathington | May 2, 2018 | James Magazine |
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Congressman Doug Collins, who represents the Ninth Congressional District of Georgia in the northeast part of the state, has been working for several years on a piece of legislation known as the Music Modernization Act (H.R. 5447 or MMA), which was mentioned in our Q&A with the Representative in *Inside Democracy* back in February.

After clearing the Judiciary Committee with unanimous approval, the House passed the MMA 415-0 and sent it to the Senate on April 25th. With 49 co-sponsors (26 Democrats and 23 Republicans) in the House, this bipartisan and measured bill should give some relief for those who despair of Congress acting on much needed and long-overdue reforms to a major law – in this instance, copyrights and royalties paid to musicians.

The law is complex, but simply put the MMA updates how songwriters and recording

artists are paid to reflect the changing landscape of how Americans listen to music in the age of Spotify and Pandora. It would change how the U.S. Copyright Office and the Copyright Royalty Board treat creators and establish a faster, fairer, and uniform method to ensure that artists profit from their work. The MMA is the first major update to this law in decades and has been praised by musicians across the nation, earning Collins kudos in publications like *Variety* and *Billboard*, and the gratitude of trade groups like the National Music Publishers Association, the Digital Media Association, the Recording Industry Association of America, ASCAP, the Internet Association, and SAG-AFTRA. Not bad for a pastor from one of the most conservative House districts in the nation!

Collins has spent much time on the Judiciary Committee working on issues relating to intellectual property, and co-chairs the Creative Rights Caucus with Rep. Judy Chu (D-CA).

“Five years ago, songwriters showed me the unfairness that had been tucked into sections of American copyright law. While the U.S. Constitution made intellectual property protections an anchor of our economy, other parts of our laws ignore technological realities and undermine free market principles at the expense of music creators and music lovers. Today’s vote shows that the People’s House can mobilize on behalf of the people—their work ethic, their livelihoods and their creative spirit. By updating copyright laws for the digital age, the Music Modernization Act encourages Americans to keep producing the anthems that punctuate our lives,” said Collins.

According to Collins, Georgia is home to around 50,000 songwriters. Many of these are household names, and some yet to be discovered. The MMA will ensure that the stars of yesterday, today, and tomorrow have the incentive to continue in their creative endeavors and provide a simpler way for the streaming platforms that are the main delivery channel for our favorite songs to generate and distribute revenue. H.R. 5447 also includes the CLASSICS Act and the AMP Act, ensuring fairness for artists whose work was recorded before 1972 and for the engineers, technicians, and producers who are integral in bringing music to the masses.

Coincidentally, the same day the MMA passed the House, music streaming giant Pandora announced a 250-job expansion in Atlanta and was welcomed by Governor Nathan Deal as another jewel in Georgia’s crown as the state assumes its rightful place as a media and entertainment powerhouse. “Pandora’s investment in Atlanta is a testament to the value of our highly skilled workforce and business-friendly environment for attracting innovative companies,” said Deal. “With this expansion, Pandora will benefit from the strategic resources available to digital leaders operating

in Georgia, as well as close proximity to our vibrant arts and entertainment communities.”

Georgia has done well to rapidly grow into a hub for entertainment, arts, and technology. It was not by accident. Support for creative arts through the Georgia Film Tax Credit, the Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act, the University and Technical College System, and recent conversations in the General Assembly about exempting royalties from state income tax are all contributing factors to the state’s emergence as a global leader in innovation and entertainment. Georgia’s musicians have long stood atop the American music scene, with cultural icons, worldwide superstars, and cult favorites alike, in all genres. Thanks to the efforts of Congressman Collins and other leaders at the State and Federal level, Georgia artists can crank up the volume to 11 and keep us listening.

For more information on Georgia’s musicians and what’s going on around the state, please visit <http://georgiamusic.org>

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