

POLITICAL CAMPAIGN MUSIC USE

Guidelines Prepared By:



ASCAP *We Create Music*

(The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Music use requires planning and securing the appropriate permissions. ASCAP has put together this list of Q & A's to help campaigns navigate their way through the proper use of music.

Q: What is the value of music in a political campaign?

A: Music possesses a unique power to inspire, motivate and energize a campaign. And music has been used in campaigns since the founding of our country. George Washington effectively used “God Save Great Washington” (a parody of “God Save the King”), Franklin Roosevelt used “Happy Days Are Here Again” (written by ASCAP members Milton Ager and Jack Yellen), Dwight Eisenhower used “They Like Ike” (written by ASCAP founding member Irving Berlin) and President Barack Obama used “Signed, Sealed, Delivered I’m Yours” (written by ASCAP member Stevie Wonder) just to name a few of the Presidential campaign success stories.

Q: What is the issue and why are music use guidelines important?

A: It has become increasingly significant for political candidates in the public spotlight to conduct their campaigns within the copyright law. Recent controversy over unauthorized music use has created unwanted negative publicity for candidates that want to do the right thing but many times require clarification on the legal obligations relating to music use. Knowing these guidelines is good for all involved.

Q: If a campaign wants to use a song in a campaign commercial, or promotional video, what permissions does it need?

A: This kind of use may involve rights such as synchronization of music with video and the possible use of the master sound recording. The campaign will need to contact the song’s publisher and possibly the artist’s record label to negotiate the appropriate licenses with them. And remember, campaign videos containing music that are posted on the Internet also require these licenses. Once the commercial has been produced, the TV and radio stations, and any web sites that transmit the commercial must hold a public performance license.

Q: What is ASCAP and what is its role?

A: ASCAP is the country’s first and largest performing right organization, representing over 8.5 million musical works from over 425,000 songwriters and composers and by extension their music publishers. ASCAP represents the non-exclusive public performance right for these works, responsible for licensing their public performance on radio, television, cable, satellite, the Internet, on mobile devices and in venues and establishments. **(Continued on next page)**





We track the use of music, identify the content owners and distribute the appropriate royalties. ASCAP is a not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to protecting our members' rights and obtaining fair compensation for the public performance of their copyrighted musical works. ASCAP provides an important income stream for members and allows music users an efficient and effective way to obtain the necessary permission to perform music for their business or their other public communication needs.

Q: What licenses does a campaign need to play music at campaign events?

A: First, while many venues have proper “public performance” licenses, as a general rule the licenses for convention centers, arenas and hotels exclude music use during conventions, expositions and campaign events. If a campaign is holding many events at dozens of different venues, it may be easier for the campaign itself to obtain a public performance license from ASCAP (and possibly one or both of the other two U.S. performing right organizations if the music is licensed through one of them). This would guarantee that, no matter where you have a campaign stop, it would be in compliance with copyright law.

Q: If the campaign events are properly licensed, can the campaign still be criticized or even sued by an artist for playing his or her song at an event?

A: Yes. If an artist does not want his or her music to be associated with the campaign, he or she may be able to take legal action even if the campaign has the appropriate copyright licenses. While the campaign would be in compliance with copyright law, it could potentially be in violation of other laws. Specifically, the campaign could be liable under any of the following claims:

1. “Right of Publicity”, which in many states provides image protection for famous people or artists.
2. The “Lanham Act”, which covers the confusion or dilution of a trademark (such as a band or artist name) through its unauthorized use.
3. “False Endorsement” where use of the artist’s identifying work implies that the artist supports a product or candidate.

As a general rule, a campaign should be aware that, in most cases, the more closely a song is tied to the “image” or message of the campaign, the more likely it is that the recording artist or songwriter of the song could object to the song’s usage in the campaign.

Q: How can the campaign protect itself against these other claims?

A: If a campaign wants to eliminate any of these claims, particularly if the campaign wants to use a song as its theme, they should contact the management for the artists and/or songwriters of the songs in question and obtain their permission. In addition to permission from management, a separate negotiated license may be required by the publisher of the composition, and if used, the record label that controls the master recording.

**Please contact us with any questions:
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