

## Advocacy and the Art of Creative Partnerships

### 2026 National Conference

HEATHER NOONAN: Good morning, everyone. Thanks so much for being here. We're really excited to kick off this session. We've got a lot of content planned, and we are grateful to see all of you in this packed room. We're very excited. I'm Heather Noonan, the Vice President for Advocacy for the League. Together with my partner, Najean Lee, we are the two-person office in Washington D.C. that works with all of you to advance federal policy and also to grow advocacy skills for the important work that happens in your community and at the state level as well.

We have a terrific panel assembled here. They're going to each introduce themselves as they talk about their own approach to recent advocacy projects that they have underway. And then we're going to spend a little time in conversation about the strategies that seem to be working for today's policy environment. After we have that conversation, we'll spend a few moments also listening to the questions you have about the work that you're doing as well. But first, I wanted to say we named this the Art of Creative Partnerships for a few important reasons. One is when we're working at the federal level, we have found it essential to be side-by-side with the broader art sector as we make the case for the value of the work that's happening in orchestras at the community level. We've also found that it has been really important to frame up the work that you're doing every way in terms of the creativity that you're involved in—the living, breathing art form that is the symphony orchestra experience. And in framing up the creative workforce that is behind everything that you do, from the musicians, to the administrators, to the volunteers who make it all happen, right?

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So as we've done this work, we've had, I'm just going to say this is a panel of my favorite friends and advocacy who've partnered with us through the really challenging issues around the pandemic and how we, as a creative sector, could survive that really threatening environment. When the economy is fragile, these are the partners who've helped us make the case for why the arts need direct federal investment. As we look at the environment that we're in now, you'll also hear them talking about why protecting human creativity and the rights of arts-makers is especially essential. So what I hope you'll take away from this is not just what are the hard policy issues that are important to address today, but also what are some new ways that you can adapt new messaging to all of the forms of advocacy you do? From talking to policymakers, to talking to prospective donors, to talking to potential audience participants, what are the ways we're framing up the value of this work that really land and make an impact? So I think I'll hand it first to my colleague Todd Dupler from the

Recording Academy to share with us some initial thoughts about the work that you've got underway today.

TODD DUPLER: Hi, everybody. How are we doing? Good morning. My name is Todd Dupler. I am the Chief Advocacy and Public Policy Officer for the Recording Academy. The Recording Academy is the organization best known for the Grammy Awards, but we are a membership organization. We have close to 30,000 members across the country, and our members are all artists, songwriters, musicians, producers, engineers, music professionals. And we like to say that the Grammy Awards is one day out of the year, but we are a 365-day organization, so that when you join the Grammys, it's not a one-night stand. It's a lifelong commitment.

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So one of the ways we serve our members is through advocacy. And I'm based in Washington, D.C., with the team. And I think as we talk about this theme for the panel today, two things I'm going to keep coming back to that are really key cornerstones of doing advocacy in this space is that, one, you can't do it alone, and two, that it takes time. And I think those are both things that are really hard when you're in the thick of it to remember, because sometimes you feel the urgency. One, that you have to move fast and move alone into that which is taking too long. But these things do take time. And we have great examples that bear out that most successes did not happen overnight. They've happened over a long stretch of time.

Heather asked me specifically to talk a little bit this morning about the work we've been doing around AI and artificial intelligence. That seems to be a popular topic these days. How this first started for us, I remember going back maybe three or four years ago being in Los Angeles for Grammy week. And I was at one of our industry events, and people kept coming up to me saying, "What are we going to do about AI? What are we doing about AI? You're the head of advocacy in D.C. What are we doing about AI?" And I was kind of like, "Yeah, we're working on that." And then I got on my phone, and I was like, "What is happening with AI?" [LAUGHTER] Because it was so new, nobody knew what this was. But that was when it was hypothetical, and now we're living in it. And it's something around us every day. And so I think the first thing you have to think about is what is your organizing principle? For us at the Academy, the story of recorded music is the story of technology, right? You went from multi-track recording in the studio, we've gone through synthesizers and drum machines and sampling and Pro Tools and software in the studio.

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And so throughout every generation, there have been changes to the technology we use and the methods we use to create music. And how do we adapt to that? In some ways, AI is

just another iteration. It's another tool, another technological advancement that people are going to use to create music, but there are some unique ways that AI is different. And so, you know, Heather used the words "human creativity," and that really is the core, the essence of what we are here to protect—the human at the heart of music. Our members are people. And so how do you balance that need to, one, embrace new technology? We're not anti-tech. But we do not want something that is going to replace the people that make music special.

When you think about AI policy, it helps to kind of organize it into four buckets of how change happens with AI. There's the litigation bucket, the place where people are suing each other, and change happens through the courts. There's the regulatory bucket, where you have government agencies taking action under their own authority. There's congressional action, passing laws. And then there's industry action when industry stakeholders are cutting deals with each other. And we've seen all four of these things at play in the AI policy space. When it comes to legislation, that is the slowest one to happen of all four, and we've already seen that. We've seen regulatory action from government agencies. We've seen lawsuits that have yielded industry deals and relationships. We have not seen any legislation passed, at least not at the federal level. We have seen some at the state level. And so, again, that principle of things take time and of remembering that Congress is very slow. It's the deliberative body. Define "deliberative" however you choose. [LAUGHTER]

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So, as we think about the policies we're focused on, the first one that stood out to us is, when you're thinking about these AI, generative AI models, you can think about both the inputs and the outputs. What goes into the AI, and then what is the AI producing? A quick issue for us was image, likeness, and voice. We were quickly seeing AI used to create digital replicas, not just deep fake videos, but also fake sound recordings, where you could release a sound recording that sounded exactly like an artist, release it onto a streaming platform, start collecting royalties on it or divert royalties away from the real artist, and they had nothing to do with this recording. There's something kind of fundamentally transgressive about that, to know that somebody can take your voice and your image and create something that is not you, but purports to be you to the rest of the world. And so we've honed in on that issue as an area of action. On the input side, we also know that these AI models are using copyrighted works to train, that they are taking the work of other people to teach these AI models how to create music, and they're doing that without permission.

So all the legislative action we've been focused on at the Academy and with our allies, including people at this table—especially Kevin there at the end—has been on those two sides of the ledger. We've had the most, I think, impact on the image, likeness, and voice

issue. We are currently working on a bill in Congress called the No Fakes Act. This has been something that's really been so far at least a two-year project, I think it's really a three-year project, and the key thing is that, again, you can't do it alone. You can't just introduce a bill and expect it to pass unless you have broad support from the stakeholder community. So, in building the No Fakes Act, we've worked with a broad cross-section of stakeholders, not just people in the music community, but with the film studios, with the unions, but also with tech companies.

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So we've negotiated, we've worked with the streaming services, we've worked with open AI, with Google and YouTube to support this legislation and come up with a framework that they're agreeable to. So then you can go to Congress and say, "Hey, look, everybody thinks this bill is a good idea, and nobody opposes it. Why don't you pass it?" And that usually works eventually. We're not there yet, but we're working on it. As Congress works in this kind of slow crawl, we've also found that there's an opportunity to get things done in the states. Sometimes state legislatures can move faster, get things done quicker, and we've had success, first in Tennessee where we passed a bill called the Ensuring Likeness, Voice, and Image Security Act, or the ELVIS Act for short. If you want to pass a bill in Tennessee, it can be really helpful to call it "ELVIS." [LAUGHTER]

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So that worked. We were able to get that bill passed in 2024, and it has become a marker for how states can move in this space. And we've had similar and different versions of this legislation or related legislation passed in Illinois and California and New York, and we've had it move in other legislatures but not signed into law yet. But the great thing is that no AI company, no tech company wants to have to deal with 50 different standards for how to address this issue. And so the more we push these bills at the state level, the more it puts pressure to get a federal bill done, because they would love to have one clear answer of how to deal with these fakes and replicas. The other side, as I mentioned, is the input of what are these models training on? Are they using your music? How do you know? And so there are a couple of bills. First of all, I will say this is one where the litigation bucket has really been the most active.

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We've seen the major record labels and publishers suing companies like Suno and Udio over copyright infringement. But there's still a real lack of transparency and accountability about what these models are doing. So a couple of bills that we've introduced there, one is called the TRAIN Act, one is called the CLEAR Act. They're both two different ways of kind of

answering the same question, which is how do we get transparency on these AI companies? So one would give a copyright owner the ability to file an administrative subpoena to say, "I suspect you used my copyrighted work in this training model. Tell me what you used." The other one, the CLEAR Act, would require AI companies to disclose to the copyright office ahead of time what they used in their training models and have a repository where you can go in and look at that. So those bills are both actively before Congress. In some ways, they're kind of messaging bills. They're really a statement of principle, of there should be transparency around these models.

But the hope is that, as Congress moves towards passing something, some larger framework on AI, that both of these concepts, both around transparency and around protecting image and likeness and voice will be included. And to show how progress does move and how you can measure it, if you think about the beginning of last year, when this White House first came in, all the talk was about how important these AI companies were. There was a lot of attention that they had tech giants seated at the inauguration. They've hosted these fancy state dinners at the White House for tech leaders. They've talked about how we have to keep up with China and how AI needs to be unfettered and able to advance, and that they need to preempt state laws. There need to be no rules around AI. And so this March, they released a national AI framework from the White House, and you would expect, given the last year of rhetoric from them, that it would have been giving AI companies the blank slate.

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Interestingly, there were a few interesting notes in that AI framework. First, it said that AI companies should respect copyright law. That was interesting. Then it said that there should be protection for image, likeness, and voice. It said that there should be licensing frameworks that make it easier for copyright holders to license their works to AI companies. And it said that even though the administration believes that using copyrighted works for AI is fair use, it recognizes that there are other people that disagree and that courts should be allowed to resolve the issue. Just the fact that they put that in an official White House document marked a huge shift in how they are dealing with this issue. And so it shows that the work that we do isn't done in vain. It's not like a tree falling down in the forest, that you are measuring sometimes in inches and not yards in terms of the progress that you can make. So we are still optimistic that if not this year, then even next year when there's a new Congress, that when legislation happens, and it will happen at some point, that we will have a seat at the table, and our issues will be included. So I'll leave you with that for now.

NOONAN: Thanks, Todd. You mentioned how important it's been to get a broad base of stakeholders behind this issue. And probably a lot of time goes into aligning their

perspective so you can be heard in a policy forum. But to get a bill through Congress you also need bipartisan support, right? And I just wondered if you'd comment on that because we're in a room full of C3 organizations that are nonpartisan by law, right? So we always have to work on both sides of the aisle. But it's also the only way to really make progress. And I've always thought of the work you're doing as a real standard of excellence in nonpartisanship and bipartisan partnership because so often with the issues you've gotten across the finish line, you're finding bipartisan soul mates to lead the way on each of these issues.

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So can you just talk a little bit about how you find those partners who will work well together?

DUPLER: Yes, and I think this will come up also in some of the later conversations we'll have. I think we all believe in the power of music to bring people together. It's a cliché, but it's a cliché that happens to be true. And something that we see in our work is that music always resonates with people for some reason or another, whether it is your own personal background, music you connected to, or people in your community. And yes, we've had sometimes what you would call "strange bedfellows" working on legislation together. You have Jerry Nadler, who is one of the most liberal New York Democrats running the House Judiciary Committee at the time, working with Senator Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, one of the most hardcore MAGA Republicans, now running for governor in her state, working together on music copyright issues because they both think that music matters. I think the challenge as an advocate, and especially working with members and people in the community, is that you have to be really focused on the issue that you're working on, right?

It is easy to think about all the other issues that are out there. And when we're advocating as the Academy, we pull our people aside and we say, "Look, we know there are a lot of really important things happening, and you have plenty of reasons to be angry right now. There are probably a lot of things you're mad about. But for this, we are focused on this issue, for our community, for music, and that's what we're going to focus on." And so you're going to sit down with these people, and you're going to have to set aside and block out all the other things that they do that you disagree with or that you really dislike because there is a real possibility that they are going to be interested in this issue, and they are going to want to help us on this issue.

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And you may have a hard time reconciling the fact that they are really interested in this issue, even though they do all these other things. But if you want to get this done, you have to be able to focus on that and be able to kind of put your blinders on to take advantage of

that moment. And when you're able to do that, you're able to get success, and we've found that to be true.

NOONAN: You also talked a lot about state level action, and this is our segue to Kevin Erickson from the Future of Music Coalition. You said sometimes it moves faster at the state level. I'm going to say nearly always it's moving fast at the state level. Kevin has been a tremendous partner to us on the topic of ticket fraud. And just a show of hands, who in the room is getting touched by this issue? Yes, we're hearing all the time, right? So Kevin, can I hand it over to you to talk a bit about how rapidly things are moving?

KEVIN ERICKSON: Sure.

NOONAN: Please talk about the work of the FMC and how we can all be a part of the next steps on that issue.

ERICKSON: Sure. So at the Future of Music Coalition, we operate with a think tank model. We're a very small organization. We work closely with all of the membership organizations, but we have a little bit of a different model that's more of a think tank. And that has allowed us to focus on the policy development side of things. And in our view, good public policies align the interests of artists and fans and all of the ecosystem of infrastructure that supports our artists in reaching audiences, which includes presenters, venues, and institutions. When we look at an issue like ticketing policy, like the dysfunction that we've all experienced in the marketplace is not accidental. It is the product of bad public policy choices.

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And the reason that these problems, this dysfunction has been allowed to exist, largely as to the outsized influence of a couple of problematic actors in the space. And the failure of policymakers at the federal level and at the state level to center the voices of some of the most impacted parties, which includes artists, which includes fans, but certainly includes you all, as well. The voices of orchestras in this conversation have already been incredibly impactful. It has been described as sort of a battle between King Kong and Godzilla. You have Ticketmaster on one side and StubHub, SeatGeek, Vivid Seats, all of these predatory resale companies, and this ecosystem of brokers and extractive technology firms that provide them the tools to run these bot operations. Both have virtually unlimited resources, and so the rest of us are getting trampled. But starting with some of the collaboration that happened first with pandemic relief and some of the broader collaboration that's happened across the sector since then, there have been opportunities to work together to really reorient that debate. And it's working. It's working fast. I would say that the United States is generally about 15 years behind the rest of the world on ticketing policy issues and on

competition and regulatory policy broadly, and on consumer protection. But we're starting to catch up pretty quickly. I sometimes describe it as it's helpful to think of the effort to fix ticketing as consisting of two distinct buckets that add up to a complementary and holistic public policy approach.

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One is about structural issues and the questions of who's allowed to own what. Those are the factors that went into the antitrust lawsuit. You've probably seen in the news that the jury just found liability across the board for Ticketmaster, and that will probably move towards a breakup in the remedies part of the trial that's forthcoming. But then there's this whole other broad set of questions that hasn't gotten as much attention about unfair and deceptive practices across the field, and that is a market regulation question. That is a set of problems that we can solve with strong rules of the road that apply to every firm. And so it's important to have diverse stakeholders at the table in the process of coming up with an approach to market regulation, because you need to optimize for diversity of practice. The kinds of rules that get applied need to work as well for orchestras as they do for arena shows or club shows or the punk kids throwing a punk show in a Lodge hall.

You need to be able to accommodate that diversity of practice when putting these policies forward. And that doesn't happen if people aren't at the table. And this is something that we've learned in so many different parts of the policy ecosystem. One of the things that Future of Music tries to do is to be the connective tissue between different conversations, and always have an eye towards: Who should be at this table that isn't right now? Who's being left out? Whose voice is missing?

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We might not know what the special concerns unique to orchestras might be, but we can notice if there's a moment where we need to raise a flag and say, "Who needs to review this before the bill gets introduced?" And then, especially as we are at this tipping point where state legislators are moving really fast, and everybody wants to do something to solve the problems, even before they have a clear understanding of the power dynamics at work, even before they have a clear understanding of what the emerging best practices are. So as we're putting together model legislation, we've also worked with the broad Fix the Tix Coalition as a resource to putting together some model language that states can pick up. That's been one of the things that we've been trying to continually flag. How do we make sure that, for example, dynamic pricing is a really contentious issue right now, and the entirely valid outrage that consumers feel about dynamic pricing as it plays out at this arena show level, where these very, very extractive practices—it makes sense for public policies to address that, but there's a risk that if not crafted thoughtfully and inclusively that in going after

dynamic pricing in an arena show, they might eliminate the ability for orchestras to use dynamic pricing in an actually progressive way that allows them to earn as much as they can from wealthy patrons while making it possible for folks from the community to have basically subsidized admissions.

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And we don't want to take those tools away, right? But the only way the policymakers are going to be able to understand those nuances is if we commit to having everybody at the table and find opportunities to be part of those conversations. And it's happening everywhere. I think there were 20-something states that had active bills on ticketing policy in this past legislative session. There are still a few more that haven't wrapped up. And so we're still watching California and New York, Delaware, and I want to say North Carolina. But there's going to be a whole lot more in the next state legislative session. So this is the moment to start having those conversations, both with the commercial venues in your states, because they're often the ones leading the way on this, with other non-profit leaders and artist organizations across the state. These are all going to always be David versus Goliath battles, but David won. And we are winning. We are moving the consensus on this issue really quickly in the right direction.

So we have this great opportunity to just keep it up. And hopefully from there, we're able to build an ongoing collaborative relationship between all of these different stakeholders that we can sustain into other areas of policy, as well.

NOONAN: So can we just play out a quick example of how the non-profit specific issues play out on the state level? Because you've been sharing with me some examples where when non-profits came to the table, it helped turn the direction of the conversations in a couple of ways.

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One is, you can see a broader constituency for who's harmed by the issue, because you have more voices at the table, right? But then there's also the technical aspect of how we make sure this legislation will help all of those stakeholders. One thing Kevin and I have been working on together is—

The basic problem is that—and Mike from Allentown here can attest—if you do a simple internet search on one of your concerts, the chances are what's going to pop up are three or four websites that are not yours, right? And these are secondary market sellers who are telling your audience that it's going to cost them much more to participate in your concert, right? And they very likely don't have possession of the tickets that they're selling to the

audience at that time. So they are considered resellers. A lot of this legislation is written to put new restrictions on the resale of tickets. This is good for us because it protects us from this fraudulent activity. But most of you are resellers of tickets, also, right? Because you've got a subscription-based model and you, in service to your audiences, you're offering very flexible packages where they can return tickets, they can exchange tickets.

So the nuance is how do we make sure that we're surgically creating the solution that's needed, but not unintentionally harming a whole collection of stakeholders who need to be at the table to explain that story, right?

ERICKSON: Right, right, and as these issues play out in the media, they are focused on the Taylor Swift world. They are not engaged in the kinds of complicated season-ticketing arrangements that this community is dealing with all the time, for the benefit of their patrons and for the benefit of figuring out cool ways to sustain a program over time.

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That has to absolutely be taken into account. But I will say that one of our first victories in the United States out of the gate was here in Maryland in 2024, one of the strongest ticketing bills in the nation was passed. And in that process, the stories that came from the Annapolis Orchestra about performances of The Nutcracker, where their Nutcracker tickets were being resold by these predatory sites. Those were incredibly compelling to lawmakers, including lawmakers who might not have been as swayed—We helped them understand that this problem was not just limited to the top tiers of the commercial music industry, but it was reaching this level of community. These firms were just extracting money from real community-level arts programming. Those voices were transformative, and I think that's part of how we were able to reach that victory so quickly.

NOONAN: Thanks. I think we're going to turn to Randy next to continue on that theme of what does it look like when an orchestra leader embraces advocacy as not a side hustle, but one of the main things that you're doing right now. You're showing up on a lot of policy issues. You're working in partnership, and you're reframing the work that your orchestra does in a whole new way, so you can share that.

RANDY WONG: Sure thing. Well, hi everybody. It's nice to see you all here, and thanks to our fellow panelists. Yes, so the state advocacy thing has become somewhat of a passion project for me.

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I've learned a lot from coming to the League conferences, speaking with many of you, and of course, learning from Heather and Najean. And so, we had an interesting opportunity this past year, which was to introduce an idea that could be turned into a bill. So I got to walk through the whole thing and see how ideas potentially become law or state mandate. I put together a couple of slides for you. Basically, I want to start first by just introducing the vision of the Hawaii Youth Symphony, which is that music is a right in Hawaii. There's an issue in that we don't have general music or any music mandated in our State Department of Education strategic plans. And so, to have conversations with lawmakers or education officials or policy folks, funders, etc., is very difficult because they don't recognize that music or the arts should be a right. So we decided we want to get in front of that and really talk about the financial and geographic and other systemic barriers that prevent children from accessing music and the arts across the state.

So, we started by mapping our data, and we did it with the help of Najean and Heather. We wanted to take a look at where our HYS students reside throughout the state, number one. So, this map is actually by decade class. And so, what you can see is how—because our organization now is 61 years old. And so, when we started, we were really just very concentrated on Oahu, which is where the capital city of Honolulu is. And over time, we started to think, "Well, could we have kids from other islands?" And then in the last 10 years, as we rolled out our strategic vision, we said, "Well, we don't just want to get to other islands, but we want to serve kids where there just really isn't access to the arts.

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And so, one idea that we had was, "Well, how does that layer in with the area of median income, and where is there poverty, where are students under-resourced and so forth?" And so we started to see the kids that we're attracting are from these areas that are less resourced. But then, our board and others started to say, "Well, how does that compare to the access that kids have statewide in school music programs and in other types of, after-school art settings, orchestra programs, et cetera?" And we said, "We don't know."

And they said, "Well, why don't you know?" I said, "Well, because, you know, I tried calling the DOE, and no one had the data." So at first I was thinking, "Well, maybe it's just a "me" problem and it's not a "them" problem. I just don't know how to get a hold of them. But it came to pass that I talked with many other non-profit leaders and have been at Hawaii Youth Symphony now for about 15 years, and no one has the data. In fact, our Department of Education can't unpack it from their employment records. They say, "Well, call the schools and find out if they have music programs, and maybe the school doesn't know. Maybe there's a teacher that's teaching recorder as part of their arts integration classroom, but they don't document it." And so we just don't really know where these programs exist, let

alone how many kids are in them, how much contact time, how the programs are funded, how much money is going to a particular district. None of that exists. And when you look at national arts data, it really doesn't include anything from Hawaii because there's no one to send the data to them. So, that prompted an idea that we had: What if we could collect this information and how would we do it?

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So we were asking ourselves who has access to this education data, and who does not? And right now, none of us do, but we would love to see it more transparent. What are the barriers to access? And then, if we had the data, what would we do with it? So, it would be great if we could put it on a publicly accessible geographic information system and see it layered with other types of public policy layers, whether it's housing, banking, or the unbanked food security, education, you name it. It would be amazing because then we could really see not just where the arts deserts are, but how things are, where the intersections are, and what kinds of conversations could we open up with folks? Maybe they don't have funding for the arts, per se, but they have funding for housing or human services or healthcare or something else. And we could work with that to make a conversation about how the arts and how orchestras can help to break down these barriers.

So, we started to think about how we could turn this into legislation and what it would look like. Who would be the people who could be champions for it? Who would introduce it in our state legislature? And so I found someone who was a legislative manager for one of our representatives, and she was a Hawaii Youth Symphony alumnus, and she said, "Well, this is really interesting. We're looking at dashboards for housing, and there are some bills on the table to create dashboards for other types of sectors, and maybe we could do a dashboard bill." And so we started thinking about the community benefit. Who would need to be at the table? All these other ways—would it have an appropriation or not? What are some of the different paths that we could route it through different committees? Who are folks both in the House and the Senate side, who would be really interested in the arts, who aren't on the Arts and Culture Committee?

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Where are the folks who maybe serve on boards or maybe have kids that are in music? Or they believe in equitable access to health care, and could we have these conversations with them and let them know that this data doesn't exist for the arts and get them involved in it? And so as we did that, we started getting all this feedback from lawmakers on really, it is absolutely a nonpartisan or bipartisan issue, because everybody is interested in something related to music, as was previously said. And so that led us to getting the bill introduced. It was called the MADE bill, Mapping of Arts Data for Education.

It went through two House committees and a Senate committee. We had to get a lot of public testimony. So we went and we sought agencies who weren't at all in the arts, so like the Office of Economic Development, Sustainability and Planning. We got organizations centered around data equity and data transparency, folks who are really interested in the subject matter, but also other arts organizations. Of course, we got testimony from our Hawaii Symphony Orchestra, a lot of the orchestra musicians, our HYS team, our students, you name it. And we ended up being one of the most widely supported arts bills this session. And the bill actually stalled because 90% of bills don't make it through, but we transitioned to a different vehicle. We turned it into a House Resolution and House Concurrent Resolution. And then we went and got more testimony. And at the same time, we had—

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There's an AI bill for music, and there's a secondary market bill. It was at the same time. And so we were able to build some coalitions with other folks, get them to support ours, and we supported theirs. And then the resolution passed, or it was adopted, rather. And so here are some photos of our advocacy wins. You can see bottom row, we also helped the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra's bill to become the official state-designated symphony. And so we helped to organize musicians and community members.

And then, of course, the last one is our students. The power of youth voices as community voices cannot be understated. It was great to have them there as well. So we still have some work for us because now that the thing has been adopted, we're actually going to have to do the work. I have until 2030. [LAUGHTER] One of the caveats was they put together a task force that they requested me to chair, but it has like 14 people of different—it's got our Superintendent of the entire Department of Education in Hawaii, the Commissioner of the State public Charter Schools Commission, the independent schools, the Executive Director of the State Foundation on Culture and the Arts or Hawaii Arts Alliance, people from the other islands, and then the sitting senator and representative on the two arts and culture committees. So it's like a big group of people to herd. I have no idea how it's going to happen, but at least we got it through. So that's my experience.

[APPLAUSE]

NOONAN: You know, here at the League, Najean and I have been trying to keep up with this volume of work that Randy's been doing. That mapping service that you saw, that's available to all of our member orchestras, and Najean Lee leads our work on that.

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Essentially, if you've got a story you want to tell about your public value that can hopefully be told through a map, we have software to help you do it. We talked to you a little bit about the story you're looking to tell. You give us the data points, and we help make images that can help you. And this is because policy leaders, elected officials, are obsessive about maps of the people that vote for them and represent them. And it's amazing how much that can just open the door to a conversation that might not have happened otherwise. The only thing we ask of you in return for these maps is that if you like them, that you let us also tell the story that you've created. So we love to leverage this as we talk more broadly about your value. There were some great photos that Randy included there. Policy leaders love to have their picture taken too. So I'm sure at every step along the way, you had lots of snapshots of you and the young musicians talking to these folks.

The one picture I'm disappointed to see you didn't include was Randy wearing his League of American Orchestra's Giving Day socks. [LAUGHTER] I'm wearing them now, I'm wearing them now! When he testified before his legislature, and he sent us a photo of the socks and the—

WONG: I'm such a nerd, such an orator.

NOONAN: The whole thing, yeah. So thank you very much. I'm going to hand it over to Marni next, but I first want to say I was really just so moved by the way our field mobilized during the pandemic, when we were working collectively to make the case for relief for the arts sector. And this happened all over the country. It happened across industries.

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Todd was really engaged in the effort to get unemployment benefits for gig workers for the first time in federal law. And all of this happened because the folks, whose performances were on ice, made it their job to be calling up policy leaders. I'm looking at so many folks in this room who answered our calls, and we said there was a specific office that we needed to reach. Marni was really an essential partnership for us. Not only because of your really close relationship with the policy leaders in Congress from California, but also because of the work you were already doing on the ground to mobilize arts organizations within your community to be ready when the advocacy moment came. So I'm going to hand it over to you to talk about how you've done that work.

MARNI COOK: Let's see if I can do this. Hello everybody. It's a pleasure to be here amongst these amazing advocates. And I also have to say for a minute that I've only been in the government advocacy space in the last 10 years. The majority of my career has been

producing events, and I even got a degree in stage management. So from development and understanding how to track and connect people and creating a situation of where you can lead things forward, all of your work, all of your talents can go into doing government advocacy work at the local, state and federal level.

I had to throw that slide up at the front. A few of you might have heard the wonderful news that we got to be able to announce the world about a week and a half ago. And I love this picture and also what Heather and Najeen asked me to speak about. She is definitely helping us change the narrative, not just in San Francisco but in the entire world. And as Heather had mentioned, part of my job at the San Francisco Symphony is to work on government advocacy work for the San Francisco Symphony. But in my job description, as long as they'll have me, I'm also leading forward advocacy work on behalf of the broader arts and culture sector of San Francisco.

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The San Francisco Arts Alliance has been around for over 30 years, and it was the CEOs coming together, realizing that they didn't want to fight with each other at City Hall, but wanted to come together at City Hall and become a collected, trusted voice. And that is what we've been doing pre-pandemic, through the pandemic, and into the future. And as you can see on this slide, the wide variety of organizations reflected here from small, middle-to-big, as well as cultural centers. And the co-chairs currently that I get to work with, Matthew Shilvoch of the Opera and Maria Jenson of SOMArts are amazing cultural leaders that hold this view in high esteem. And together we work to understand from all of our members, and this is a voluntary organization. None of us get paid. We all just believe that a combined voice can do so much more good work together than separate.

And so as you can see, we were able to successfully lock in funding prior to the pandemic for our arts agencies in San Francisco, through the passage of Prop B, help Heather and others with COVID relief funding and the reopening work. But the last many years because you might have heard, San Francisco, yes, we have had our challenges over the past many years, but we've been able to use that opportunity to be at the table to put our arts leaders in conversation with our Board of Supervisors as well as our other elected officials to share what our top priorities are. And I wanted to highlight many of them because as we've driven a lot of these topics forward at the city level, I feel like I've become an urban planner in a way.

[00:48:00]

And it's a really cool thing to think about it that way, as you think of how people move in and through the city, how they're getting to your spaces. Who are they interacting with? How is the urban environment? And all of those things you should be asking yourself because you

can advocate for change and for resources beyond those grant dollars to help you and help your collective neighborhoods really thrive. The one thing I wanted to really highlight in this story to you is the work that we've done in regards to showing the city how we can help change the narrative of San Francisco from the gloom, you know, loop narrative to really showing how we thrive.

And that really came about through being in conversation with our Board of Supervisors, and they in turn, during budget season, came to us and said, "We can pull a bucket of money. What are your priorities? How can we help?" In turn, they were having conversations with the entertainment and for-profit sector, understanding what their struggles were, and they were able to then bring us all together and create something that I think is first in the nation. But it is really, really exciting. It's SFLive.art. And again, this is through the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor's Office, Office of Economic Workforce Development, ourselves, NIVA, and other for-profit theater arts, entertainment venues, and bars. And it's a citywide show guide. We had realized there was no way to actually showcase all that was happening in San Francisco. We curate experiences 365 days and nights a year. And yet there is no real way of giving folks access to all of that. We also spoke to OEWD about the importance of driving local tourism. We have a lot of effort that goes into folks flying through SFO or Oakland and coming to us from across the Bay, but really getting the folks that live and breathe in San Francisco to invest in San Francisco, to understand how they could activate in San Francisco.

[00:50:06]

And so when we were designing this, you know, people thought, "Why don't you do tix? Why don't you do a free or discounted ticket booth in the middle of Union Square?" But that doesn't really work with San Francisco. And so we realized it needed to be online. We realized it needed to be mobile, but we also wanted to be able to create something that wasn't going to have additional work on all of these organizations, as well as not a lot of overhead in regards to who was going to move this forward. And so I think this is a good use of AI. We've been able to use AI to scrape venue websites so that wherever these activities are being hosted, it's getting pulled into this online calendar, and it is free for all to use.

And so here's a little snapshot of one of the ways of looking at it. You can look at it through events, calendars, curators, venues. And what I love about this is you have, again, you have the right here. You have the Center of the Arts next to Fort Mason, next to the New Conservatory Theatre. It's all an even playing field. And you're able to create different taste-makers, get folks curious about what's going on in the city. This is the timeline. Funding, as Todd shared—it takes a while to get things through our lovely local, state, or federal government, but we got funding in 2024. We launched this last fall, and this summer we're

rolling out new improvements, one of which is we're now able to loop in all of our various museums and galleries to be a part of it. And we're going to be adding new features this summer, as well. This is a snapshot of the steering committees. Again, I love coalitions, so this is just showing you the bright swath of who's all involved. And then also look at that quote from Mayor Lurie. As Randy was talking about, data is king.

[00:52:03]

It is always great to be able to lead with data and to be able to make sure that this data gets incorporated into the quotes that your elected officials are throwing out at you, out there. This is just a little snapshot of where we're going with all of this, in regards to the 60 museums and galleries becoming a part of this, as well as the new features that are being added in with highlighting neighborhoods, saving the event to the personal calendar, and adding a map or view of events and venues.

This is some impact data of what we've learned to date. There's a lot of room to grow. There were some assumptions made by the agencies designing this, and we're tweaking that now, and we're looking forward to rolling out some new shock-and-awe marketing campaign, because you can create something, but if people don't understand what this is or how to access it, it's not going to go anywhere, and we want this to grow. We want this to be a known, trusted source for everyone. And some of the ideas this summer in this strategy is looking at neighborhood itineraries, highlighting all the different places of San Francisco and how you can build a day and evening. Also, venue tours. As venues are the core of what's holding what we are creating, being able to give folks a snapshot, getting them comfortable, getting to your venue. What is the venue like? What's backstage like? And using trusted voices already known in the social sphere to drive that language forward. And then also obviously branding. Branding is key, and being able to make sure that we blanket San Francisco not just this summer, but in concurrent months with the SFLive.art as we continue to build and grow this. And my hope is that it's at every port of call, every entry and exit of a BART or a Muni, public transportation through SFO. I want you to look at SFLive.art when you're coming in, flying into SFO from your various airline agencies.

[00:54:00]

So anyway, please check it out and spread the word. But this is one way we collectively came together, told the city this was a need. They were able to find the money for it, and we helped work with them to find a solution. As you all know, people come with problems, but if they don't come with an answer or the way to at least start trying to figure it out, you're not going to get anywhere. Come with ideas. We are the creative sector. We have so much going for us because we can pivot, and we can say, "Hey, what about this?" Not everything is going to

stick to the wall, but start throwing things at it because, and I like to say, "Start putting things in the water, because you never know when it's going to get absorbed."

Also, understand how much your political officials love showing themselves on screen. We have a mayor in San Francisco who believes that his job is to sell the city, and we are leaning into that big time. We were able to invite Mayor Lurie to help us with the launch of the news of Elim Chan as our new music director, and he was all on board. They're even talking about being sparring partners one of these days, so watch out Davies Symphony Hall. But then also, the Board of Supervisors have taken his cue, and they're walking out and around in the city capturing, helping to promote what we're doing out to their constituents. Again, use what they're doing. They're doing it. Just invite them in. Also, invite them during the day. Not all of these guys like to go out at night, and they have ethics rules. So, invite them to your rehearsals. Invite them when you're bringing students to your hall, and let them capture it. It makes them look good, but it makes you look even better to all their constituents. Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

[00:56:00]

NOONAN: Thanks so much, Marni. So, there are a couple of threads there that I heard all of you touch on in one way or another. We're expanding the definition of what we do to cross the line of for-profit and non-profit art making and expanding those partnerships. Also, I heard you talking about meeting policymakers where they already are. So, most of the issues we've talked about today haven't even touched on art-specific policies like funding, right? You're talking about how do we help with education reform, right? How are we talking about urban redevelopment? So, chances are whatever the policy priority was on the top of the mayor's mind, you had something you could connect to there in talking to them? Yes. So another key strategy is to just ask them.

COOK: Just ask them, and also just start building the relationships now, right? Become that trusted voice so that they can see you, as well. Wait a minute here. Davies Symphony Hall is located in Hayes Valley. We're actually a thriving neighborhood, and the mayor in a conversation with us said, "We want you to program as much as you can at Davies because we can see the impact to the small businesses and the restaurant associations." Now, it helps that City Hall is literally right across the street, so they can see it in action, but it is wonderful to have an administration that has heard the dialogue through the years of the impact of arts and culture that can have on neighborhoods and the economy. And that's what I mean by "keep putting it in the water," because as folks understand it, they believe it, and they can help you figure out those next steps.

ERICKSON: Similarly, I would say that the ticket affordability conversation, there's a lot of interest in affordability across the board, and addressing ticket fraud is just sort of a low-hanging fruit, that if you can get policymakers excited about it, it's easy to score a clear win for affordability pretty quickly.

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WONG: In fact, that's actually how Hawaii Symphony entered the ticket affordability thing, was that it's very difficult for nonprofits to promote equitable access when ticket prices are so high. And so we wanted to make sure that people aren't building negative relationships with venues and going out for live concerts because we want them to come out and support our kids and support our live musicians.

DUPLER: And what I hope you get, especially when you hear about what's happening in San Francisco and Hawaii, is that advocacy is accessible. You know, you could hear me talk about federal policy and think, "I have no idea what he's talking about. That makes no sense." Or you could hear Kevin talking about this multi-state strategy on ticketing and going, "I don't know how to do that." But you know how to talk to the people in your backyard. You know how to talk to the people in your community that already have a connection to where you are. And that's where advocacy starts. And I hope you see the ripple effect of what you can accomplish when you start there. And then it all ladders up, you know. When we do meet with members of Congress, we're doing the same thing. But you start local, and that's where you build the muscle and see the connection of how you can impact people.

NOONAN: There's a lot of noise in the policy environment, which is a subtle way of saying we're living in complex times, I guess. So I wanted to ask each of you how do you cut through the noise, and how do you cut through with messages? What are the messages you're finding that are really landing? If you can think of one, or maybe it's something you say about the music or art sector that surprises a policymaker and makes them think about it differently. Kevin is infamous among advocates in Washington, D.C. for literally using puppets to explain the Music Modernization Act for policy leaders, right?

[01:00:16]

ERICKSON: Yeah, you can look it up. It was on C-SPAN 3. It apparently did well enough on C-SPAN 3 that they promoted it to C-SPAN 2.

NOONAN: There are all kinds of strategies, right? To get attention and also to help things land.

ERICKSON: I mean, it started because, as I was going around talking to staffers, it was a complicated bill, and they kept saying, can you explain this to me like I'm 5? And so I just went full Sesame Street and got the puppets. So here's the musician, and here's the record label, and here's the streaming service, and here's how they pass the money around. Especially at the state level, elected officials and staff are dealing with way too many issues and a broader portfolio of issues than they can reasonably be expected to actually understand.

So a lot of it is just about earning trust. Once they know that you are the trusted person who they can go to on this topic, who has the wealth of understanding, that allows them to know that the policy is going to be okay, that they feel comfortable enough with leaving the unknowns out of it, that if they follow your lead, they're going to be pulling things the right direction. That's the thing to aspire to. I definitely want to encourage people to get over the feeling of intimidation about it because in so many, especially at the state level, you are so much more of an expert than anyone else in the room on some of these topics.

[01:02:03]

I remember the first time that I got flown out to California, and it was this unfortunate thing where it was me and a woman from the venues, then everybody else in the room who had been summoned by the committee staff to talk about ticketing policy. It was a contract lobbyist for one of the big companies, and they knew nothing about the issue set and they were sitting there Googling terminology on their phones throughout this whole meeting because they'd never actually worked in the industry. You are so much more of an expert than your adversaries once you get involved in these policy conversations. So feel some confidence about that.

DUPLER: And the best way to cut through the noise is through music, right? Most policy is boring, like road issues and transportation issues and infrastructure, and that's not fun to do that stuff. Music is fun. That's like lead with the thing that you have that stands out. But I also want to double down on what both of you said about being a trusted resource, because I think when you use that as the entry point, but when they know that you are going to give them real information that is true and that they can trust you, then they are going to keep coming back to you. It's amazing when you can map what the economic impact is of these things. But to not just say when they come to you and say, "So who doesn't like this?" Nobody. Nobody doesn't like this. You can say, "Look, X, Y, and Z are going to come in, and they are going to tell you this. And here's why I think they are wrong." But this is the argument that you are going to hear. And when they know that you are going to be honest with them, they will keep coming back to you.

COOK: I agree with everything that has been said, but I also want to state the obvious, that track who your board and your donors are friends with, and also with your fellow arts collaborators or are friends within the representative level, and use them at the appropriate moments.

[01:04:04]

You don't want to use them all the time, but be able to make sure that as you are going into a situation, one, you've got the data to back behind you. You are speaking authentically and truthfully, but then also you look at what other voices can help elevate what you are saying.

WONG: I agree it is definitely authenticity. It's being likeable. If you're a pest, they're not going to want to talk to you, but if you go and get to know them and remember and find out what they're about and what are the issues that they are supporting, and find a way to talk with them on those issues as well as how it intersects with your world, maybe your broader world, then whatever you say will have more resonance and will be more sticky. But I think certainly talking about the next generation, talking about the power of youth and where our youth will take us if we listen to them and if we give them the opportunity. And if we—or if we just don't get in their way, so that they can really lead us, you can't go wrong there.

NOONAN: I mentioned that we have very many national coalition partners. A lot of them are in the non-profit sector and are art-specific. And I will say that we can be an annoyance sometimes when we're in a meeting on the Hill with those colleagues because when the conversation starts, and they find out who we represent, the staffer or even the elected official will want to spend the first five to ten minutes telling us their story about how they learned the clarinet in fifth grade, and they wish they'd never stopped. And, you know, they've got—everyone's got a music story in their life. And, you know, it's good to let that take up the space, like you were saying, Todd, too, the music tells the story best. We're almost at the end of our time here, but we wanted to save time for one or two questions from you. So, if you'd like to ask any of our experts here. Yes?

[01:06:07]

MALE QUESTIONER: Hello. The SFLog.art. Do you think that technology is transferable to other regions?

COOK: Absolutely. I hope that by sharing this case study with you guys today, that this gives you some inspiration to say, "Well, what about—why aren't we doing this?" Wouldn't it be wonderful if there was an individual per city, per town opportunity to be able to find out what is happening and really celebrate what is happening in your area? I mean, this is Plinth Agency and then Vibemap. Vibemap is the AI company that the city chose to use in the build

of this. And feel free, I'm happy to connect you with folks if you want to know more. But I hope all of you can take this and say, "Hey, let's do this in our space."

MIKE STEFFEN: Heather, I'm Mike Steffen, Quad Cities. Not all of us have the ability or the time maybe to address—to sit down with these policymakers face-to-face like you guys are doing. I've had good luck with witness slips at the state level. A couple of trusted organizations that when they send me an email, I mean, just like we believe in the League, I will take action on it. And they make it easy for me. You push this button, and it takes you right to the witness slip, and then you tell the state rep or state senator to please oppose this bill. I don't have to do a lot of typing. It makes it easy. I don't know who can do that at this level, federally or state, but I'm just throwing that out.

[01:08:02]

NOONAN: Yes, so you're teeing this up really nicely because the League of American Orchestras has e-advocacy campaigns on nearly every issue moving at the federal level. So keep an eye out for our action alerts because just like you said, you're careful about when you go to those top-level contacts and say, "Now's the moment. I need you to make that call." We're very careful about how often we come to you and say, "This is when we need you to reach out to your members of Congress." So please believe us when we send those messages, that what you can do to respond is really important. The other thing I'd say is there are state networks, like the ones you just described, that you might want to inventory and ask yourself, are we at the table with these groups? Every state has a nonprofit alliance that is really active at the state level and legislation for the charitable sector. Be a member of your state nonprofit alliance. Nearly every state has an arts education alliance. Are you in that loop? Are you getting those messages? Your state arts alliance. NIVA was mentioned a few times here, the National Independent Venue Association. This association was born of the pandemic. They literally created themselves because they saw a need for the emergency relief that eventually became the Save Our Stages and Shuttered Venues Program. They've got regional and state level chapters that you can get plugged into. They have nonprofit members as well. Todd has an amazingly effective network of Recording Academy chapters that are engaged with each other and with state policy leaders. So I'd just say make sure that you're taking that shortcut of being side by side with the folks at the state and local level who are already engaged.

ERICKSON: I would add consumer protection groups to that list as people that you should be reaching out to, in part because some of the time they can get pulled the wrong direction because they haven't talked to folks like you.

[01:10:04]

NOONAN: One more question. Yes?

DIANA LOVE: My name is Diana Love. I'm from the Annapolis Symphony Orchestra. You gave the example of what happened with our ticketing. I actually was one of the people who went before our state legislators to be a witness on that case, which actually was about some of our classic music concerts. We called them our Signature Series. We have a ticket opening price of \$25, and third-party ticket vendors were selling our tickets for over \$1,000. And in this case, people would show up. One of them was in our community a VIP, the president of a local college, and she had purchased a ticket for which there was no seat, and we were sold out. So we, because we have very close-knit relationships that we've built from the ground up with the help of our board members and others with our local delegates, it was easy for us to just call Dawn Gile and say, "We want to be witnesses. We want to talk about this. Can we have a meeting, so we can describe it from our experience?" I cannot underscore how important it is to build those relationships, which start with a phone call with your local alderperson, and then working your way up. However, my question is once we got that far, and we were seating at the table against the Orioles and the Ravens and people who like third-party ticket vendors, what is it that we could do with the League to try to grow our voice, our reputation, and our power as an industry in these types of situations?

NOONAN: Yes, absolutely. So I'm also going to ask Kevin to weigh in more specifically about the David-Goliath equation that you just described, as well. So at the federal level, we're networked with the organizations that are working on this problem as well. And I'll say the technical expertise that Kevin described is actually the thing that is making more progress than trying to make our shoulders bigger than for-profit entities that are funding a lot of campaigns on the Hill.

[01:12:18]

So just really rely on the story you just told as landing with policy leaders. That's one thing I will say. From the league's perspective, what we're trying to do is make sure that the not-profit part of it is always in the room when the federal policymakers are working on a solution. It will take a lot longer at the federal level to see something than you'll experience at the state level. So we have been working with NIVA on the model draft legislation that states can use. And what we do is take a look at their excellent product and with Kevin say, 'If we make this little change here, we'll make sure that the non-profit and subscription-based model is supported by this.

So I would say if any of you become more engaged at the state level, if you do want to reach out to me, we can talk you through those pieces of it because we've road tested it a bit.

Kevin and I are in policy conversations with the Federal Trade Commission. Those are going slowly, but something might become—a report might be coming soon. We're talking with some House leaders who are really aggressively trying to get the ideal legislation at least introduced as a marker bill. But the more we hear from you about your stories, the better we can do things at the federal level as well. Do you want to add?

ERICKSON: I mean, I think that at the state level, one of the—every state is different in terms of who the stakeholders that have capacity to engage in advocacy are going to be. They have the benefit of being able to look at it from the national point and get the 30,000-foot view, but there is no organization that actually has the capacity to granularly track the status effectively of all of these bills in all of these states.

[01:14:17]

Everybody's doing their best, but I think that is really frankly a place that more philanthropic investment in folks who can be that connective tissue between federal and state policy conversations and make sure that the folks engaged in those fights are able to maximize the potential of a coordinated coalition, rather than it always being such an ad hoc David and Goliath fight, which is how it has played out so far.

NOONAN: We were really thrilled to see that we had a packed room here today. I'm going to be honest with you. There was an AI session opposite this, and I was sweating a little bit. So thanks so much for being partners in advocacy with us here today. Please join me in thanking our panel as well.

[APPLAUSE]

[01:15:24]