

## A Note from the Director-General on Operations During the Pandemic

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Since mid-March, NABA's mission has been to **"be there for our industry."**

The pandemic has required innovation by our members, and by NABA. As you will note below, the broadcast world as we know has changed.

### State of North American Broadcasting

I think all of us have marveled at how the industry has responded to the pandemic but, as we enter the half year mark, a few points are worth underlining:

- Broadcasters sent between 75%–80% of their workforce home in March. Some staff are now returning to meet operational requirements, but these increases are very modest.
- Remote services have required a great deal of innovation and accelerated adoption of new work practices and technologies, which is a success story.
- The delivery of local/regional information has been a critical public service during the pandemic. The sheer geographic size of North America requires specific information for a region/community that is not necessarily shared by other regions. Staffing and maintaining those local/regional services in Mexico, the U.S. and Canada has been a major achievement for the broadcast community.
- Sports events and coverage are gradually returning. Once again, broadcasters have been creative in their approach to coverage while respecting the social distancing rules of the pandemic. Broadcast crews are much smaller with fewer cameras, remote commentators and graphics, and back-up control centers. Our members are using all their tools in different ways and it is working remarkably well.
- While the mission of broadcasting remains the same, how we achieve it during the pandemic and into the future has likely changed forever.

### NABA Initiatives

- The Resilience and Risk Committee hosted regular calls on the health/safety/operational/staffing issues and challenges as the pandemic evolved. The calls were timed to respond to the current situation and were open, honest, and helpful to industry members in finding the best solutions to fit their needs.
- The Technical Committee has held webinars on matters of current interest to members. The first webinar focused on what we have learned about broadcasting in a pandemic, including network and station operations, producing content from home, and the technologies used to support these efforts.

The TC also had a webinar on a range of Spectrum issues, including the C-Band transition for 5G, Wi-Fi in 6GHz, Repack and WRC-23 (all issues that are proceeding, regardless of a pandemic), the current U.S. ATSC 3.0 rollout and 5G for Broadcast. Future webinars will include Cybersecurity, Media-over IP, and Ad Spot Metadata.

- The Radio Committee prepared and presented two panels for the virtual NAB Show Express. The first session focused on a summary of topics the NABA-RC has prioritized (in-car user experience, hybrid radio, and metadata) and the other was a more in-depth look at the WorldDAB guidelines on in-car user experience to be rewritten for a North American audience.

The committee is continuing work with a focus on the in-car user experience, hybrid radio/metadata and music rights.

NABA has also joined the NAB as a partner member of their conference planning committee to bring radio perspectives from North America and the world.

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- The Legal Committee continues to meet by teleconference. A new WIPO Broadcast Treaty protecting broadcast signals has been a work in progress for many years. An opportunity has arisen with the election of a new WIPO Director-General to see this treaty put in place.

The LC work (along with the WBU-WIPO Broadcast Treaty Working Group) will be critical to achieving a Diplomatic Conference in 2021 on a new treaty.

- Working groups and sub-committees (Ad Spot Metadata, Spectrum, and Cybersecurity) have all met via teleconference two or three times in the past months to further their agendas and will continue to do so.
- NABA's Board of Directors met (virtually) twice over the past months.

A priority for the Board is to fulfill its new strategy, which speaks to the principles of relevance, value, timeliness, diversity, and a presence in our community via open discussions on industry issues and, where possible, reaching a consensus on a way forward.

As an initial response to the above, NABA is planning a series of Fall webinars which will focus on the transformation of our workforce and services from linear to digital.

## WBU Initiatives

- The Secretaries and Directors General met by video conference in place of their annual face-to-face meeting to review the work of the WBU and its committees. It was noted by them that the opportunity for a Broadcast Treaty breakthrough was welcome news for the global broadcast community.
- Two statements from the meeting were made: the first was on Media Freedom and Safety of Journalists in covering pandemic-related issues and the racial protests which swept the world over the Summer. The second statement concerned the closing of the ABS/CBN networks in the Philippines (that deprived around 40% of the Filipino population of television and radio services) and asking for

this situation to be reversed by the Filipino Congress. Both statements received follow up in Europe and Asia.

- A Webinar presentation by the WBU/NABA Technical Committees was made to the International Trade Association for Broadcast & Media Industry (IABM) on Cybersecurity requirements by broadcasters. The purpose was to communicate to the manufacturers that there is a global consensus on these requirements, and they would be part of any RFI/RFP for equipment which may be subject to cyber attack. It was a useful and well received event.
- The International Media Connectivity Group (WBU-IMCG) cancelled their Bergen Forum last May but held two Webinars in July: one on coping and best practices for broadcasters around the world, and the other on how the vendor community responded to both the pandemic impact in their own company and servicing the needs of broadcasters. The Webinars were valuable for the industry and the IMCG is planning another series of Webinars in October.
- The WBU Technical Committee will meet by video conference later this Fall, but work continues in cybersecurity, spectrum and 5G through continued sub-committee discussion, sharing of papers and output.

As I write this brief report, I note that the IBC is presenting their event virtually this week, as did the NAB some months ago. Both organizations continue to innovate to serve their constituencies, as does NABA.

What we all miss the most are the opportunities these types of events offer in face-to-face meetings, presentations, and a quiet word over coffee. And while many of our practices will have changed the way we do business, the opportunity to meet and share our interests will happen again.

Until then stay safe and well. ■