



# The PIRATE Act

H.R. 538, 116<sup>th</sup> Congress

Sponsors: Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY) & Rep. Gus Bilirakis (R-FL)

*"The same broadcasting standards that empower first responders and air traffic controllers to communicate in life-or-death situations are also helping parents protect their children and themselves from hateful bigotry and vulgar obscenities."*

❖ Congressman Paul D. Tonko

## Pirate broadcasts undermine public health & safety

- **Pirate signals disrupt Emergency Alert Systems (EAS)** and other services used by first responders that are essential to public safety
  - **EAS alerts save lives by delivering critical updates to residents and families** on local & national emergencies such as tornados, hurricanes, flash floods or missing children alerts
- Pirates often transmit high-powered signals in densely populated areas, **exposing nearby residents and families to radiation** levels above the federal safety standard
  - **A pirate broadcaster in Clifton, New Jersey operated at 2,573.3 watts**, exposing anyone within 68 feet of the transmitting antenna to radiation levels above the MPE standard
  - **In the Bronx, a pirate station was operating at 288.4 watts**, exposing anyone within 22.76 feet of the transmitting antenna to radiation levels above the MPE standard
- Transmissions can **include abusive, bigoted, misogynistic language and criminal organizing**
  - The Orange County Gang Unit in Miami, FL arrested an illegal pirate operator in 2010 for allegedly **broadcasting criminal activity** including where to buy drugs & find sex workers

## They interfere with air traffic & first responder systems

- Interference from pirate stations also cause **errors in navigational guidance**, disrupt pilot to ground communications and other aeronautical systems
- 100 illegal pirate stations operate just in the New York City area, and their numbers are rising

## Congress Can Do Better!

- Penalties for pirate radio interference should be at least as serious as the threat it poses

### H.R. 538: The PIRATE Act

- **Preventing Illegal Radio Abuse Through Enforcement (PIRATE)**
- **Increases fines for pirate radio broadcasting** violations to no more than \$2 million
- Imposes fines up to \$100,000 per day for pirating violations, subject to the same \$2 million limit
- Endorsed by:
  - **National Association for Broadcasters (NAB)**
  - **New York State Broadcasters Association (NYSBA)**
  - **National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters, Inc. (NABOB)**

*Pirate radio creates problems for first responders, air traffic controllers, parents and communities!*

Connect with Representative Tonko on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram: @RepPaulTonko