



MORT MEISNER ASSOCIATES

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Ministers Urge Congress to Save The Word Network

WASHINGTON – Yesterday, a delegation of prominent, Christian ministers visited Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., to appeal to Members of Congress regarding Comcast Corporation’s recent actions against The Word Network, the largest African-American religious network in the world.

Inexplicably, on Nov. 11, 2016, Comcast executives sent an abrupt, two-sentence letter to The Word Network, stating it will no longer offer the channel to millions of subscribers.

Based on the letter, on Jan. 12, 2017, The Word Network will go dark in African-American communities around the country, including Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Baltimore, Houston, San Francisco, Denver, Boston, and Minneapolis-St. Paul, among numerous others.

In an effort to compel Comcast to abandon this plan, the ministers met with nearly a dozen Congressional leaders and select regulatory officials to voice a number of concerns.

“This situation is unlike any other Comcast dispute that has ever been brought to Congress because it is not about money,” said Kevin Adell, founder and CEO of The Word Network. “The Word Network makes its programming available to Comcast and other cable providers at no cost, even though our network has a large and devoted audience.”

Last week, Reverend Al Sharpton spoke out in defense of The Word Network. On Jan. 4, 2017, Sharpton sent a [letter](#) to Comcast expressing concern that the company is undermining previous commitments made by the company to increase its roster of diverse programmers, while also strengthening existing diverse programmers.

In a separate development yesterday, former president and CEO of the NAACP, Ben Jealous sent a letter to Comcast’s David Cohen echoing Sharpton’s concerns. Jealous was a signatory to the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding in which Comcast pledged to increase diversity in the programming it carries. In his letter, Jealous states, “[T]he largest African-American religious network in the world will be removed from over 7 million Comcast subscribers. It seems to me that this undoing violates the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding and runs contrary to the commitment of increased African-American programming.”

Citing these issues during their meetings, the ministers urged Members of Congress to act and demand answers from the cable giant about its treatment of the The Word Network.

“The Word Network is a fixture in the lives of many Members’ constituencies,” said Adell. “If allowed to proceed with this cruel and unwarranted plan, Comcast will be dealing a devastating blow to the African-American community.”

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