

Payola Rules

If employees of broadcast stations, program producers, program suppliers or others accept or agree to receive payments, services or other valuable consideration in exchange for airing material, federal law and FCC rules require broadcasters to fully disclose this fact to audiences at the time the programming is aired.

What the rules say

The Communications Act and the FCC's rules require that:

- When a broadcast licensee has received or been promised payment for airing program material, then the station must disclose that fact at the time material is aired and identify who is paying for it;
- All sponsored material must be explicitly identified except when it is clear that the mention of a product or service constitutes sponsorship identification;
- Any broadcast station employee who has accepted or agreed to accept payment for the airing of program material, and the person making or promising to make the payment, must disclose this information to the station prior to airing;
- Any person involved in the supply, production or preparation of a program who is receiving or making payment for its airing, or knows of such arrangements, must disclose this information prior to the airing;
- Broadcast licensees must make reasonable efforts to obtain from their employees and program suppliers information necessary to make required sponsorship announcements;
- The information must be provided up the chain of production and distribution before the time of broadcast.

These rules apply to all kinds of program material aired over broadcast radio and television stations. Some of these rules also may apply to cablecasts.

Filing a Complaint

If you suspect a broadcaster has violated FCC rules, you can file a complaint:

- File a complaint online at <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov>
- By phone: 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322); TTY: 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322); ASL: 1-844-432-2275
- By mail (please include your name, address, contact information and as much detail about your complaint as possible):

Federal Communications Commission
 Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
 Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
 445 12th Street, S.W.
 Washington, DC 20554

Accessible formats

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to fcc504@fcc.gov.

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