

Written Statement of

Tom DeGeorge
Crowbar

Before the
Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations (PSI)

On
**“Corruption Takes Center Stage: How Lie Nation - Ticketmaster Settlement
Threatens Antitrust Enforcement”**

May 18 , 2026



Hello my name is Tom DeGeorge. I'm an independent venue owner in Tampa, Florida. I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania, studied Criminal Justice at Penn State, and worked in live music venues in college. In 1996, I was a security intern at the Olympics in Atlanta. While there, I visited a music venue called The Masquerade, an old historic mill that was one of the coolest spaces I had ever seen. By the time I graduated in 1997, I knew I wanted to work in this industry for the rest of my life, even if my parents thought I was crazy.

At just 24, I became General Manager of The Masquerade and later relocated to Tampa to run its sister venue, where I eventually made the historic district of Ybor City home. Ybor City, Florida is a small nook in a growing city that I have fallen in love with. Over the years, I'd volunteer with Ybor Chamber of Commerce, I helped found the Ybor Merchants Association, and in October 2006, I would finally get my own business opened. I named the venue Crowbar, an homage to a room I worked at while attending Penn State. I think this is when my mom and dad finally saw what I saw and were proud of me for forging my own path. Life was good. I met my wife shortly afterwards and after 10 years of doing what I loved, young artists would tell me that when they imagined touring someday, they'd dream of playing in my 300-capacity room.

Fast forward to March 16, 2020. The pandemic struck and venues all over the country were shuttered. Out of that crisis, the National Independent Venue Association was born. I represented the state of Florida in the fight to pass the Save Our Stages Act. After eight grueling months, we succeeded in passing the largest arts relief bill in our nation's history: \$16.2 billion to help save independent venues, thousands of jobs, and the communities built around them.

Since then, the challenges haven't stopped. We've fought for ticketing reform and pushed for the breakup of Live Nation and Ticketmaster. At the same time, we've dealt with inflation, local development fights, and the everyday realities of trying to survive as independents in markets dominated by giant players. More often than not, I tell people we're still fighting to "Save Our Stages." These next two experiences explain exactly what that fight looks like.

On October 12, 2022, I got an email from AEG Presents asking to hold dates at Crowbar for an artist named Jake Wesley Rogers. We confirmed a February 24, 2023 date and were preparing to announce the show when, out of nowhere, I got a call saying Live Nation had obtained the rights to the tour and would now be promoting the show. I explained that I had no agreement with Live Nation and was not willing to work with them. I had been outspoken about the company and stood by that. Soon after, Live Nation contacted me directly. I again told them I was not comfortable doing the show with them. Later that day, I got a call explaining that Jake really wanted to keep the kickoff date in our room. That meant something to me and ultimately, we made the show happen at Crowbar.

The problem was, to keep that show independent, I had to match what Live Nation offered the artist, roughly twice what I would have paid if I'd booked it myself from the start. For a 300-cap independent venue, that's the difference between a good month and a bad one.

That's the reality independents face. Live Nation can afford to inflate artist guarantees, overbid on tours, and even lose money on individual shows because they make billions through Ticketmaster and frankly every other part of this industry they've gotten their hands on. Independent venues cannot operate that way. When it's your own room, every show has to make financial sense and right now, there is simply no way to compete.

Moving onto story number 2. On April 4th, 2025, I flew to DC to attend a roundtable discussion with then-Assistant Attorney General of the Antitrust Division, Gail Slater. In that meeting, I shared the experience I just spoke about and I stressed that the Live Nation trial was really important to thousands of us. I also explained how the resale ticketing market – which is really predatory scalpers extracting as much as they can from fans, and delivering none of that to artists, is crushing our rooms, especially small under 500 capacity rooms like mine.

Scalpers use illegal bots to vacuum up tickets faster than fans can buy them, only to relist them at exorbitant prices. The resale platforms can sell just a fraction of those tickets and still make their money back, or absorb the loss entirely because they are playing a numbers game. Meanwhile, I lost valuable ticket inventory and all the fans who would have been in my room buying drinks, merch, and supporting the venue. For my venue alone, I estimate that predatory ticket release costs us roughly \$200,000 a year.

I felt heard in the room with Assistant AG Slater which was a really good feeling. After we were done, we took pictures. Assistant AG Slater asked if we should do the thumbs up like President Trump, and I asked if we could do the fist instead, like a fist of justice. That ended up being the photo she posted on her X account. As a Criminal Justice graduate, it was a moment I was incredibly proud of.

We had lost our mom a couple years earlier and my dad's health was really struggling so I was so happy to be able to share with him what I had done. He passed away just a few months later.

On February 12, 2026, I got the news that Assistant Attorney General Gail Slater had been removed from her position just days before the start of the Live Nation trial. To say I was disappointed would be an understatement.

Then, just three days into the trial, we heard the federal government had reached a proposed settlement with Live Nation for \$280 million dollars, which amounts to just a weekend of sales for the company. For those of us who have spent years and years trying to bring art, culture, and community to their towns, it was hard to stomach.

But just like we did in 2020, the independent venue community came together again. Thousands of venue owners, promoters, workers, and fans reached out to state Attorneys General begging them to stay in the fight and continue the case. And thank God they did, because a jury ultimately confirmed what so many of us in this industry already knew: Live Nation and Ticketmaster is an illegal monopoly. They control every piece of the pie: tours, ticketing, venues, artist management, vending, and more.

And that's really the problem. The power is in the monopolistic tours.

Think about what it actually means when Live Nation controls 100% of an artist's tour. It's not just that they're promoting and advertising the show. They decide every city, every venue, every ticket price, every ticketing platform, and which fans can even afford to walk through the door, from the first date to the last. And because they own the venues, run the ticketing, and manage the artists, every single one of those decisions benefits them. The independent venue in that city never even gets a phone call. There's nothing left to bid on.

A 50% tour cap would change that. It means that when a major artist hits the road, at least half of those dates have to be put out to real competition, local promoters, independent venues, people who actually know their cities and their fans. And when local promoters compete for shows, more cities get dates, more venues stay open, and more fans have access to live music that doesn't cost them a week's paycheck.

The DOJ tried consent decrees before and Live Nation violated them repeatedly. They would agree to rules, break the rules, get new rules, and break those too. Just like a weed, the same monopoly power just keeps growing back. A breakup needs to happen, but a breakup alone is not enough. If they still control the tours, they still control the industry and none of us want that.

After 20 years, my venue will close on July 31st of this year. Many are calling it the end of an era. I am the last of the thriving mainstay independent music venues that has served as anchor businesses in Ybor City for years and years. About a month ago, a press release came out from a real estate investor and developer announcing plans for a new 4,300 capacity Live Nation venue in my neighborhood.

That is how this happens. Not with one knockout punch but slowly. Show by show. Year by year. Live Nation controls the tours. Independent venue owners slowly lose access to artists, shows, revenue, and their future. Until one day you read that a brand new Live Nation venue is coming to your neighborhood while the 300-capacity independent venue you spent decades building is getting ready to close its doors.

I don't want to live in a country where rooms like mine no longer survive. I'm here today, not asking for your pity, not asking for special treatment, but on behalf of my community, asking for a fair shot. I'm grateful this journey has brought me here to you today. Thank you for having me.

Attachment: Rolling Stone Commentary "*Indie Venue Owners Have Wanted 'Justice for Years.'*
The Live Nation Verdict Could Change Everything" Stephen Parker, Executive Director, National
Independent Venue Association *Rolling Stone* | May 1, 2026

COMMENTARY

ADVERTISEMENT

INDIE VENUE OWNERS HAVE WANTED 'JUSTICE FOR YEARS.' THE LIVE NATION VERDICT COULD CHANGE EVERYTHING

"The jury gave us the verdict to build" a better concert industry, writes the executive director of the National Independent Venue Association. "The court now has to be bold enough to do so."

By **STEPHEN PARKER**
MAY 1, 2026



"The jury found that this architecture is illegal and made Live Nation and Ticketmaster an illegal monopoly," writes Stephen Parker. "The remedy has to reach that architecture."

KYLE GUSTAFSON/FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

LOST AND FOUND

'Mr. Nobody Against Putin' Oscar Statuette Found in Germany After TSA Confiscated It

51 MINUTES AGO

COURTS AND CRIMES

'Taylor Frankie Paul, Dakota Mortensen Displayed 'Violence Both Ways' in 'Very Toxic' Relationship: Judge

1 HOUR AGO

EXCLUSIVE

Marcus King Doesn't Have Time for Your Judgement: 'The Court of Public Opinion Is So F-cked'

2 HOURS AGO

'NOBODY FUNNIER'

Martin Short's Comedic Genius Lauded in 'Marty, Life Is Short' Doc Trailer

2 HOURS AGO

ADVERTISEMENT

For years, [Live Nation](#)'s executives told anyone who would listen that they weren't a monopoly, just a very large, very successful company with a lot of satisfied customers. On April 15, a federal jury in Manhattan saw through it. After six weeks of trial and four days of deliberation, the [jurors found](#) Live Nation and [Ticketmaster liable on every count](#): monopolization of the ticketing market, monopolization of amphitheaters, and, crucially, unlawful tying of Live Nation's promotion services to its ticketing and amphitheaters. [*Ed. note: Live Nation plans to appeal the ruling.*]

That last finding is the one that should guide everything that happens next.

The tying verdict is not a legal technicality. It is the lived experience of independent venues, festivals, promoters, fans, and artist managers in America, finally recognized by the courts. And the trial evidence made clear exactly how the tie operates in practice: through Live Nation's control of tours. The former head of Brooklyn's Barclays Center testified that his venue switched back to Ticketmaster not because of pressure on any single show, but because Live Nation, which manages artists and books their tours, threatened to pull the entire touring relationship from the arena. John Abbamondi, then CEO of the company that runs Barclays Center, testified that when he called to confirm his arena was leaving Ticketmaster, an "irate" Live Nation CEO Michael Rapino warned him it was "going to be tough to continue delivering concerts to the venue."

ADVERTISEMENT

That is the mechanism. Control the tours, and you dictate which venues get the shows. Threaten a venue with losing its touring pipeline, and that venue feels it must sign a ticketing contract you put in front of it. Ticketmaster skims fees on every seat, then profits again when that seat is resold. Live Nation manages the artist, and then can steer them to its preferred venues. The jury found that this architecture is illegal and made Live Nation and Ticketmaster an illegal monopoly. The remedy has to reach that architecture.

TOP STORIES NEWSLETTER

A Cultural Force That Transcends Generations

BY PROVIDING YOUR INFORMATION, YOU AGREE TO OUR [TERMS OF USE](#) AND OUR [PRIVACY POLICY](#). WE USE VENDORS THAT MAY ALSO PROCESS YOUR INFORMATION TO HELP PROVIDE OUR SERVICES.

ADVERTISEMENT

EDITOR'S PICKS



Greatest
Albums of the
21st Century So
Far



Greatest
Episodes of All
Time



Greatest
Albums of All
Time



Greatest
Albums of the 21st
Century

Monetary damages will be part of this lawsuit's remedy, and this money should flow directly to those Live Nation harmed: independent venues, independent promoters, festivals, and fans. The jury found Ticketmaster overcharged consumers \$1.72 on every ticket over four years, a finding that triples under antitrust law, with billions of dollars at stake. That money matters. It will help fans and rebuild a sector in which 64% of independent venues were unprofitable last year. But let's be honest about what money cannot do. A check, no matter how large, does not restore competition. It does not undo 15 years of contracts signed under duress. It does not give an artist back the tour they never got to route their own way. A fine that Live Nation can earn back in a few days, like the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) paltry [\\$280 million settlement](#), is not accountability.

ADVERTISEMENT

The only remedies that match the harm the jury found are structural. Four of them belong in the court's final order.

First, Ticketmaster must be separated from Live Nation.

The 2010 merger was permitted only under a consent decree that the Justice Department itself found Live Nation had "repeatedly" violated. That decree was modified and strengthened in 2020. Live Nation violated it again. The DOJ's own 2024 complaint states the decrees "failed to restrain Live Nation and Ticketmaster from violating antitrust laws in increasingly serious ways." Behavioral remedies have been tried twice against this company. Twice they failed. A third round is not a serious proposal. Undo the merger.

Second, Live Nation must be capped at promoting no more than 50% of any individual artist's tour.

The trial evidence established that tour control is the leverage that drives everything else. Take the lever away, and independent promoters, regional promoters, and artists themselves finally have a real seat at the routing table. Live Nation cannot credibly call 50% extreme: the company itself agreed to a 50% threshold on ticketing in its settlement with the DOJ. It is their leverage with their tours that actually drives the harm across their market power.

RELATED CONTENT

[We Took on Live Nation and Won. Here's What the Verdict Means for Fans](#)

[I Led the DOJ's Antitrust Division. 'David Beat Goliath' in the Live Natio...](#)

[Everything to Know About the Live Nation Verdict, What It Means for Fan...](#)

[How an Antitrust Rock Star Won a 'Total Victory' Against Live...](#)

Third, Live Nation must divest its artist management businesses.

When the same corporation manages the artist, books the tour, owns the venue, and sells the ticket, there is no point in the chain at which an independent competitor can get a fair look. When the company that sells you the ticket also manages the artist, the artist's team may not be negotiating on the artist's behalf anymore. It could be negotiating on Live Nation's.

Fourth, a divestiture that permits Live Nation to immediately re-establish commercial relationships with the entities it was forced to sell is not actually a breakup.

That prohibition must be explicit: no venue Live Nation owns, operates, or exclusively books may use Ticketmaster; no artist managed by a divested management entity may be routed through Live Nation's promotion or venues; and Live Nation can't acquire any company without prior legal approval. Without a hard commercial firewall, no revenue-sharing, no data sharing arrangements, no anticompetitive backroom dealing, for no less than 15 years, the breakup changes the org chart and nothing else.

These remedies are proportionate. They are what the jury's own findings and the trial evidence require. Every one of them is on the table in the remedies phase now underway before the court. Every one of them should be in the final order.

ADVERTISEMENT

The independent stages I represent, from the amphitheaters that host tens of thousands to the tiny listening rooms that develop the artists Live Nation later profits from, have been asking for justice for years. We asked when Congress held hearings. We asked when the Taylor Swift Eras Tour collapse put Ticketmaster in the spotlight. We asked when the Justice Department walked away from the case a week into this trial, giving Live Nation a sweetheart deal that did nothing to protect independent venues, festivals, and fans. Thirty-four state attorneys general and a New York jury finally got it done.

Here is our vision for the future: an artist books a tour and chooses their own manager, their own promoter, and their own stages, because those should be three separate businesses competing for their business. An independent venue or promoter has a competitive market to book that artist because Live Nation doesn't have the leverage of owning the room, managing the act, controlling 100% of the tour, and dictating the tickets sold. A fan buys that ticket and pays a fee that a competitive market set, not a monopoly that is funneling tickets out the back door to scalpers.

TRENDING STORIES

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <p>1.
Fugees Rapper
Pras Turns
Himself In to
Begin 14-Year
Sentence</p> | <p>2.
James
Broadnax
Executed After
Being
Sentenced to
Death Based on
Rap Lyrics</p> | <p>3.
Trump's New
Surgeon
General Pick Is
a Fox News
Contributor
Who Tried to
Trademark
MAHA</p> | <p>4.
David Allan Coe,
Singer of the
'Perfect
Country &
Western Song,'
Dead at 86</p> |
|--|---|---|--|

This is not a radical vision. It is what a functioning market looks like. The jury gave us the verdict to build it. The court now has to be bold enough to do so.

Stephen Parker is Executive Director of the National Independent Venue Association ([NIVA](#)), the nation's live association representing independent venues, promoters, and festivals across every community. Parker previously served at the National Governors