



**Association of Film Commissioners International 40th Annual Cineposium
Remarks**

Senator Chris Dodd, MPAA Chairman and CEO

Atlanta, Georgia

September 23, 2016

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning, everyone, and thank you.

Thanks also to Kevin Clark and everyone at AFCI.

Let me take just a moment to recognize the terrific work Kevin is doing.

Under Kevin's leadership over the past several years, the AFCI bolstered its education program, AFCI University. In the past year alone, AFCI University awarded more than 40 new Certified Film Commissioner designations. Which—as I am sure all of you are aware—is the highest professional development certificate a film commissioner can receive.

Since he took the helm at AFCI in 2013, Kevin also made it a priority to increase collaboration between your organization and the MPAA. Both your work and ours has been more impactful as a result.

Thus I reserve my biggest thanks for the more than 100 commissioners in attendance today, from six continents—all of you in the business of facilitating motion picture and television production across the globe.

I am honored to be here and suspect you are, too. Because the work we do in the motion picture and television industry has the power to introduce new ideas across the globe. And as we stimulate minds, we also stimulate economic development in the cities, states and nations where motion picture and TV productions occur.

Here in the United States, for example, productions spend an average of \$225,000 per day in local communities—employing locals actors and crew members, renting hotel rooms, hiring caterers and truck drivers, using dry cleaners, buying lumber to build sets, and so on.

Our industry creates a positive ripple effect wherever we go—both culturally and economically.

Great industries and organizations adapt and innovate over time.

And I can think of no two better examples of this than the evolution of the motion picture and TV production industry and the evolution of the AFCA.

Two-thirds of a century ago, your organization was launched as an offshoot of the local chamber of commerce in one of the remotest corners of the U.S.—Moab, Utah.

Moab is home to some of the most rugged terrain in America. It is barren and blistering hot in the summertime. And with its sagebrush and gigantic rock formations, it became the go-to backdrop for some of the most iconic Hollywood Westerns ever filmed.

John Ford shot *Stagecoach* there, in 1939. And he returned in 1950 to film *Rio Grande*, with John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara.

When Hollywood came to Utah, that first local film commission helped with logistics. Getting permits for filming ... cutting bureaucratic red tape ... working with police departments and highway departments to clear streets.

As the decades unfolded, commissions begin to sprout up in other states ... then internationally.

And today, commissions worldwide still do what they have done since the beginning—plus a whole lot more. Today you assist with location-scouting; you help source local talent and crews; you attract multi-million-dollar investment in your communities.

You made it possible for filmmakers from Hollywood to Hong Kong to Rome increase the delight-factor for audiences and increase revenues for the communities in which filming occurs.

And by helping producers make movies that were more authentic in appearance, you helped make the movies and TV a truly global industry.

Let me underscore this point by discussing just one movie franchise—one of the enduring franchises of all: *King Kong*.

RKO Pictures released the first *King Kong* in 1933. In that legendary picture, a boat sails from New York to the mysterious Skull Island, home of the eponymous King Kong.

Some live-action establishing shots were filmed in New York. But—in keeping with the customs and technology of the times—RKO filmed most of the movie in Hollywood, on a jungle set actually created for a different movie.

Next, fast forward to 1976, to the Dino De Laurentiis remake featuring Jessica Lange in her first film role.

The remake was also shot in California, but the fictitious Skull Island looked a lot more authentic the second time around. And for good reason: the jungle sets of the past were replaced by the real thing—the lush jungles of Hawaii.

In that 1976 remake, the big finale of the film was shot on location in New York. More than 30,000 people showed up to be extras as Kong climbed to the top of the South Tower of the World Trade Center, where he was attacked by soldiers armed with flamethrowers.

Managing crowd control and fire safety and logistics in 1976 was a much bigger challenge than in 1933. But by the mid-1970s, the NY Commission's staff were seasoned pros.

Now fast forward again. Next year Kong returns to delight audiences worldwide. In 2017, Warner Brothers' *KONG: Skull Island* will premiere. This nearly \$200 million reboot features Samuel L. Jackson, John Goodman and an all-star ensemble cast.

And here is the point I want to underscore about how commissions have enabled the flourishing of a truly global business: The picture was filmed on location in Vietnam, Australia's Gold Coast and the Hawaiian island of Oahu.

Nearly seven decades on, we have come a long way from jungle sets in Culver City.

So far this morning, our cinematic globetrotting has taken us from Utah to New York to Hawaii to Australia to Southeast Asia.

Which brings me to our next stop: Right here in Georgia, whose commission was established in the early 1970s.

What this state has achieved in a relatively short time is utterly remarkable.

Georgia is home to one of the most vibrant, robust—and successful—film commissions in the US.

A combination of strong incentives and a fantastic home-grown talent pool has catapulted Georgia into the top ranks of motion picture and TV production.

Georgia's numbers should be the envy of public officials worldwide:

- Motion picture and television production accounts for 25,000 direct jobs here in Georgia. Generating \$1.7 billion in wages.
- And listen to the credits: 245 feature film and television productions have been shot in Georgia ... catapulting Georgia to the number three production center in the USA, just behind California and New York.

Congratulations to Governor Nathan Deal, Commissioner Chris Carr, Lee Thomas, U.S. Senator Johnny Isakson, and the extraordinary talent here in Atlanta.

Because fantastic creative product is coming out of Georgia every day—and more is coming: Tom Hanks's new film, *Sully*, and Ben Affleck's new picture, *The Accountant*,

were both filmed here. As is one of the most-watched TV shows in the world: AMC's *The Walking Dead* ... which is broadcast in more than 125 territories.

And this is just one state: Here in the US alone, the motion picture and television industry contributes more than \$41 billion to over 345,000 businesses *per year*—contributing more than \$19.3 billion annually to federal and state tax coffers.

Opportunities abound—and not just in Georgia.

Here in the US alone, about 600 feature films are produced a year. And let us not forget about television: more than 435 scripted TV series are currently in production.

This industry is thriving more than ever before. In part because the creative output is outstanding. And also because 35 states have film tax programs—and nearly every major-studio movie budget includes a line for subsidies.

Film tax-credits are now widely available across the USA, creating several thriving mini-production hubs in states far from California.

For our international visitors here today, I am delighted to report that international locations—staples in blockbuster feature films—are increasingly a backdrop for certain American-made television series, too.

Netflix's first series produced by Weinstein Company— *Marco Polo*—was filmed on location in Italy and at the new Pinewood Iskandar studios in Malaysia.

Narcos—Netflix's first Spanish-language production—was filmed in Medellin and Bogota, Columbia.

Both productions were filmed on location because the local film commissions offered attractive production incentives.

Let me say it again: There has never been a better time for us to make movies and TV shows together—here in the USA and across the globe.

Let me talk for a moment about the secret to our success.

We are most successful when motion picture and television production in your respective markets is certain, predictable and sustainable.

Here in Georgia, for example, incentives influence location decisions, but so do stable budgets like this state's eight-year, uncapped credit. It is that kind of stability and predictability that makes shooting here such an attractive prospect.

Likewise, states like Illinois and New York also ensure that the terms everyone agrees to in season one of a show will be locked in and sustained two, three or four seasons later. This is why producers like Dick Wolf of *Law & Order* fame go to these cities to film their hit series—and *stay there*.

Further, we also realize that the success of your programs depends in part on your ability to access and share production impact data.

As you may know, the MPAA's member studios track to the penny their production spends. Those dollar figures—which are proprietary for competitive reasons—are on file at the studios and in a database at the MPAA.

Kevin Clark and I continue to work to make our strong story even stronger by looking for ways to share with you the total impact of a movie or TV production in your jurisdiction—above and beyond the direct dollars pegged to your commissions' credit programs.

My main focus this morning has been on motion picture and television production.

But there are two other dimensions to this industry that I'd like you to think about: Exhibition and Celebration.

When motion picture and television productions wrap, everyone's instinct is to move onto the next project. But motion pictures return to your community a year later and appear at your local cinema.

When they are exhibited, this creates a terrific opportunity to celebrate the positive economic and social impact we are making.

I know some of you do this already, but for those who do not, I encourage you to consider inviting related business and civic leaders and theatre owners to join you at the cinema—where all can be reminded of the production's impact on your jurisdiction.

Think about coordinating with us to set up VIP screenings where opinion leaders can be made aware of our remarkable economic impact story.

We have built very strong coalitions that include everyone from unions and guilds to local actors and business owners to help us tell our story. Invite them to screen a motion picture. Imagine having the head of a guild talk about job creation. Or imagine giving audiences an opportunity to hear from someone who worked on the film in a creative capacity.

It is in forums like this that we can also highlight the importance of protecting the integrity of our creators' work. And call on others to help us protect and defend copyrighted creative content—and fight piracy.

Current copyright laws have fostered generations of creativity, innovative business models, and unparalleled offerings of motion picture and television programs. Help us identify vendors in your states who can reach out to lawmakers as advocates against any drastic reductions in copyright protections.

When we do this, we create a virtuous cycle, where producers and studios can recover their investment, then come back to *your* city, state or nation and stimulate *even more* employment and economic development.

Once the shoot wraps, the work in your jurisdiction is not done.

Nor is it done in mine.

Which is why I invite you to tell us how the MPAA can support your efforts.

Tell us about the demands on you from local community, commerce or economic development departments. And from lawmakers and regulators. Tell us how we can help you with our member studios. What additional resources and assistance can the MPAA and its members studios provide in your jurisdictions? We want to know about the demands on you—and how we can help.

To the AFCI and all you commissioners in attendance here today ...thank you for an outstanding partnership. Thank you for the great tradition of teamwork we have established.

Working together, we are making movies and TV better ... and making the lives of your citizens better by stimulating job-creation and economic development.

On behalf of all of us at the MPAA and our member studios, we look forward to collaborating with you on the next blockbuster hit.

Thank you.