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VIA EMAIL

30 November 2021

jcruse@wgno.com

Mr. John Cruse

WGNO

RE: False Advertisements Sponsored by Watchdog PAC

Dear Station Manager:

We write on behalf of The Northshore Wins, Inc. regarding false advertisements being run by “Watchdog PAC.”¹ The false suppositions underlying these advertisements call into question whether Watchdog PAC did any factual analyses before submitting the advertisements to your station.

For example, one such advertisement states that, in “[a]reas with casinos, FBI statistics show, an increase in violent crime, murder, rape, embezzlement, drugs, prostitution, human trafficking, and many many more crimes.” This allegation lacks any legitimate citation other than the vague reference to “FBI statistics.” This citation is so general as to render it meaningless. Moreover, as explained below, an analysis of FBI statistics reveals the opposite to be true. Because the advertisement proclaims an untrue statement, your station must cease airing it.

Another commercial states that: “A casino will not bring the kind of economic development we need. . . . Crime will rise and small businesses will suffer.” These allegations lack any citation whatsoever and are also contrary to publicly available information.

St. Tammany Corporation, the official economic development agency of St. Tammany Parish Government, commissioned a study by Convergence Strategy Group that addressed the potential impacts that a casino resort would have on the surrounding area. Convergence Strategy Group issued the attached Crime Impact Report and Small Business Impact Report. These reports cite FBI statistics, and include first-hand quotes from the Louisiana State Police as well as regional police and sheriff departments. Convergence Strategy Group’s analysis included a review of the impact of casinos on the City of Baton Rouge and, citing FBI Uniform Crime Reports, concluded that crime in Baton Rouge actually *decreased* after the introduction

¹ The ads are available here: <https://www.facebook.com/stoptheslidellcasino/>, <https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/5181310>, <https://host2.adimpact.com/admo/viewer/5180608>.

of casinos.² Convergence Strategy Group concluded that claims that violent crimes increase because a casino enters an area are not supported by the data. Convergence Strategy Group further concluded that unbiased past studies and independent research regarding the number of businesses, employment, wages, and retail sales before and after casino development all reveal that the proposed East St. Tammany gaming and entertainment resort can be expected to have a positive impact on surrounding businesses. No comparable casino development has been identified where there have been negative impacts on small businesses from the development of a casino resort. These two (2) reports establish the complete lack of bases for the statements made on behalf of Watchdog PAC in these two (2) advertisements.

In light of this clear data and analysis, it is impossible to conclude that the allegation that “FBI statistics show an increase in violent crime, murder, rape, embezzlement, drugs, prostitution, human trafficking, and many many more crimes” in “areas with casinos” is anything but false and misleading.

Because the factual claim underpinning the ad is untrue, your station must cease airing it.

Unlike candidates, independent political organizations like Watchdog PAC do not have a “right to command the use of broadcast facilities.”³ Because you need not air this advertisement, your station bears responsibility for its content when you choose to do so.⁴ Moreover, you have a duty “to protect the public from false, misleading or deceptive advertising.”⁵ Failure to prevent the airing of “false and misleading advertising” may be “probative of an underlying abdication of licensee responsibility” that can serve as cause for the loss of a station’s license.⁶ **This advertisement is blatantly false and should be removed immediately due to the proximity of the December 11, 2021 election in which thousands of citizens are currently early voting or voting by absentee ballot.** Watchdog PAC should not be permitted to keep flooding the airwaves with advertisements that are demonstrably false. Thank you for your attention to this matter, and please contact me immediately at (504) 237-6399 to confirm that these advertisements are no longer airing on your station.

With kindest regards, I remain,

Sincerely,



Stephen M. Gelé

SMG/AMS
Attachments

² As of the end of 2019 (the most recent year available), total crimes in Baton Rouge were 11% lower than in the year before L’Auberge opened; violent crime was 16% lower, burglary was 50% lower, robbery was 29% lower, motor-vehicle-theft was 82% higher, and larceny was 4% higher.”

³ See *CBS v. DNC*, 412 U.S. 94, 113 (1973).

⁴ See *Felix v. Westinghouse Radio Stations*, 186 F.2d 1, 6 (3rd Cir.), cert. denied, 314 U.S. 909 (1950).

⁵ Licensee Responsibility With Respect to the Broadcast of False, Misleading or Deceptive Advertising, 74 F.C.C.2d 623 (1961).

⁶ *Cosmopolitan Broad. Corp. v. FCC*, 581 F.2d 917, 927 (D.C. Cir. 1978).