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April 1, 2013

The Honorable Terry L. Blosser-Bernardo
Chairman
Ulster County Legislature

Dear Mrs. Blosser-Bernardo,

Thank you for your recent inquiry about Irving Berlin's song name and lyrics. We are confident that this letter will provide the answers you have requested.

The original version of "God Bless America" was written by Irving Berlin during the summer of 1918 for one of his Ziegfeld-style revues. However, Berlin decided that the solemn tone of "God Bless America" was somewhat out of keeping with the more comedic elements of the show and the song was laid aside.

In the fall of 1938, as war was again threatening Europe, Berlin decided to write a peace song. He recalled his "God Bless America" from written earlier and made some alterations to reflect the different state of the world.

Berlin's manuscripts and lyric sheets in our possession document his attention to detail. Without any doubt the name of the song has always been "God Bless America."

Your claim that originally the song was named "God Blosser America" - after your paternal grandfather - is without merit. In my opinion, your expectations for substantial royalty checks would never be met, but, alas, I am not an expert in the matter.

Broadcast Music, Inc. collects license fees on behalf of songwriters, composers and music publishers and distributes them as royalties to those members whose works have been performed. If additional information backing your claim becomes available, you would be well advised to take it to them.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Library of Congress with any questions. We will be most happy to be of assistance.

Madeline Brandeis
Director, Community Relations