July 23, 2015

RE: Copyright Protection for Certain Visual Works

I am a fine artist and writer with concerns about proposed changes to copyright law.

It has always been great that creative people in the United States can easily copyright their material with little to no cost. My concerns about the proposed changes include potential costs to artists to copyright their original images, designs and works. The proposal indicates vaguely that the organization who "may" be in charge of tracking copyrighted material could be private. This is a concern, both for the cost, and also because the intention should not be that someone make a profit off of the necessity of copyrighting original material.

Another concern I have is that the proposal makes it sound as though anyone can claim that the owner of a copyright was not found on a simple search, and assume work is in the public domain. This puts the costs of finding copyright violations and correcting misuses of copyrighted works on the artist. The individual or organization who claims they could not find the copyright owner has no risk nor penalty for using other people's work through the "I didn't know who owned" loophole. Allowing use of artists' work without credit, attribution or payment creates a hardship for anyone who makes a living selling their creative work.

I often provide information about artists when I see uncredited work posted on social media, saying "if you 'd like to credit the artist, it is … " with the artist and work name. Almost every time, the original poster of "borrowed" artwork says they could not find the artist name, so they posted without credit. This happens daily. I am willing to spend the extra ten minutes to find an artist through reverse image search and other methods, but many people are not. Therefore, when they share an image they do not own, and provide no credit for the image, it gets farther away from the artist's control and closer to being considered "orphaned" even if the artist is very active in crediting work on his or her own venues.

Please consider these issues when reviewing the proposal for any legislative changes.

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