Dear Lawmaker,

I have been a professional artist since 1988, and I have a degree in Marketing Communications. I have been published in several magazines including: Country Life in 2000, Wisconsin Marketplace, and Art Business News. I have won several awards for my art work, including: Best of Cubism, and 2nd place in ink and drawing media from Fine Art America and others.

I started out as a graphic artist, and art director. Where I created various designs that were then placed on products. I created the art, but it was not mine it was the work product of the corporations that employed me. To acquire that art they PAID me a salary. In 1997 I struck out on my own formed a corporation (Alma Lee Originals Inc.) and became involved in art licensing. I was represented by both Alaska Momma Inc. and Big Tent Entertainment Inc. In all our licensing contracts we sought an advance prior to the publishing of the image, because often the commission percentage was low and the art market became saturated with your image before you had even made the amount of the advance. After gaining representation and 20 licensing contracts, we were forced to dissolve the corporation because of a lack of profit. During this time, 9 months of my work was stolen by China as they considered it "national". To this day it and derivative works are being produced various products, copyrighted under there own or their customers names, and I receive nothing in way of commission or compensation. Even though we got a lawyer, produced the copyright, all that was achieved was a promise by Hobby Lobby that they would not purchase from that company anymore. In the end I lost control of all my artwork produced from 2004-2006. It is still in production and widely available but absolutely profitless to me.

I have since left my licensing agent and now I have my own gallery and negotiate my own licensing contracts. The art I produce is my WORK PRODUCT and the copyright is all I have to generate licensing income.
Contrary to the Copyright reform claim, my art does not lose its value when it is published. When published properly and in the hands of professional licensee, it gains a market, and therefore generated future income for the artist. This can only happen when there is a contract in place that holds the licensee accountable. This can be achieved only if the copyright remains as part of my business inventory.

In closing, I am one of a dying breed, as a professional artist, I work 6-10 hours a day, 7 days a week. I do not make a great deal of money, but I persist not just out of personal passion, but I believe art is important, it is a powerful tool of communication used to shape not only our culture, and paradigms, but a business tool that informs and educates it's consumers in an instant or causes them to pause and consider purchase.

In the digital era now in full swing, art and intellectual property are at risk like never before. Our copyright laws should be even more protective. Anything less is

like breaking into my studio and stealing the painting right off my easel, only easier!

Sincerely,
Alma Lee
Founder/President
Alma Lee Originals
She Shack Studios