12 July 2015

To Whom it May Concern.
It's my understanding that there are proposed changes to the US Copyright Act that could dramatically affect an artist's rights to their own work.

I have been a professional freelance artist/illustrator for almost 30 years, and have illustrated countless books, magazines, newspaper and journal articles. Most of my pieces are highly specialized reconstructions of prehistoric creatures, requiring extensive knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of animals both living and extinct. The research and execution of a single illustration usually takes many weeks, months or years.

As digital media has expanded over the years, I am offered less and less money for the use of my illustrations. Many "clients" often expect me to provide them for free, and are discouraged when I ask for a very modest fee. The only way I am able to get any real value from my illustrations is by being able to make a small amount of income each time one is used for an article, book, or online resource. I can do this because I retain the copyright to my work.

Even with the copyright act fully intact, many of my illustrations have been stolen. Because they entail so much time and specialized knowledge, they may be the only images of the particular creatures. Billboards, magazines, business cards, books, and websites feature some of my illustrations even though I have not authorized their use or been compensated for that use. I can only imagine what would happen if there were no copyright act protecting me.

Online images are increasingly easy to find and use, which makes it harder and harder to find illustration work, and the pay for the few jobs is often very low. I am able to make a modest income from my illustration because I have all of my work as an inventory, which helps to offset the enormous amount of time that has been invested in each one.

Infringements of my work is the same as stealing my money.
It's important to leave the copyright act intact, to preserve artists copyrights.

Sincerely,
Mick Ellison