Expressions in Watercolor

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To whom this concerns:

I am a professional artist and have been an artist for almost 20 years. I paint in watercolor and now that I am retired from my past employment as a graphic designer, my income is dependent on selling my art. **I am a past President and current Signature member of the Northwest Watercolor Society**, one of the top watercolor societies in the country with a membership of almost 900 artists. And believe me when I say this… *I am speaking for all NWWS members!*

In order to cultivate art patrons and to create sales, we produce art that becomes part of our inventory of products. We are then must show images of our work on our websites, through social media, galleries, and in art competitions. That means that digital images of our work are published on the internet for all the world to see… ***and to steal.*** And when someone else steals our art, they are stealing our ability to make a living.

We artists don't make a lot money from selling our work — only a very few even manage to survive without teaching — but every artist I know is hoping that with additional promotion on the internet, which makes us vulnerable to artistic theft, we will be able to cultivate a greater following and do better each year. Publication of our work on the internet adds to its value, it doesn't diminish it.

Our entire ability to do this is supported by the fact that right now, as creators of our art, we have automatic copyright and ownership… no one else has the right to use or sell our art for their own purposes. If you strip that right away through a new Orphan Works and Mass Digitization Act, our ability to cultivate and manage our own businesses and patrons, and to make money from our own art disappears. We do not have the financial ability to register every painting we create and place in inventory. How are we supposed to better our circumstances if the new copyright law will allow large, sophisticated *companies* to steal our work and sell it for their own gain instead?

I personally cannot believe that the copyright office is poised to pass this new copyright act. ***HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU ARE EVEN THINKING ABOUT THIS, MUCH LESS MAKING IT A LAW?***

Personally, if this act passes it will simply be the last straw for me. Any respect I have had in the past for this country and its tenet of protecting its citizens over "big money" corporations will completely disappear. It is unconscionable that this law could even come up for a vote, but if it does, it will signify to me that once again, money is all that matters.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Murrah

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