Meagan Thompson

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Rebecca A. Womeldorf
Secretary, Committee on Rules of Practice
and Procedure

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to address a "notice of inquiry" for the Library of Congress, the U.S. Copyright Office in regard to the copyright protection for certain visual works [Docket No. 2015–01]
I am a working visual artist in the medium of photography and I am a United States citizen. I am a working artist with nearly a decade of experience. I also have a degree in a creative field from an accredited US university. I spent considerable sums of money to build my knowledge in the arts gaining an education from the University of Montana in journalism with an emphasis in photojournalism. After almost a decade of professional work, my student loans are still not paid off but my body of work and inventory are added to daily and I am working very hard to build a business off of the skills obtained in school and as a working professional photojournalist.

Five years ago I left the failing newspaper industry to start my own business and I again invested in various educational opportunities including a business education class offered through the Montana Arts Council. I am currently acting as a contracted instructor for this program, The Montana Artreprenuer Program, and the tools I teach to visual artists are helping them to build successful small businesses that bring in significant sums of money to their families and local economies. The principals teach through this program allow visual artists with extremely unique visions of the west to successfully compete in national art markets. These artists do not represent the banal vision of the artist as a starving, lazy individual but rather an empowered member of society contributing to our collective economic and cultural wellbeing.

Implementing a law that threatens to take away the power an artist has over their own visual work would significantly undercut their small business operations. Copyright law is not an abstract legal issue, rather it is the basis on which my small business (and the businesses of many, many other visual artists) rests and infringing my work is taking valuable money away from my business, from my family and even from my community.

After working in the photojournalism field, I completely understand that upon publication, my work does not lose its value. When my work is published and properly attributed to myself, my work becomes more widely known and by business name becomes more prominent, which any marketing specialist will tell you, can lead to increased sales and notoriety of a brand. In the five years that I worked as a professional photojournalist, my name was attached to my work for daily publication. This notoriety built my credibility as a journalist and when I won numerous awards for my work, my publication in turn became more respectable and reputable. Now, as I move into a new field with my own art business, I am also seeking publications that will build my credibility. To date I've been published in newspapers and art and literature publications. This fall I will be featured in a nationally know medical publication, Harmony Magazine, that works with visual artists to showcase valuable works of art that help us to understand sickness and healing in the medical field. The publication prints my name, the name of my work of art and contact information so that a line of connection can be established with my work and art collectors or the general public. The information also provides context to the piece of art so that curious readers might have more knowledge as they take in the publication. This is important for both the publication and for myself. Publication of my work also acts as a great advertising tool for my business of art. It is important to my business of art to be able to determine voluntarily how and by whom my work will be used.

Thank you for looking out for the millions of creators and small business owners who contribute to local economies in a real way. We are all working hard to make America an excellent nation. I only ask for the same respect as those companies that are much, much bigger and more powerful. I know my work is valuable; I've sold many pieces to hundreds of people, that's why I implore you to stand up for me and keep the copyright to my work in my hands.

Thank you,

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