July 22, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Reid Psaltis, I've been a freelance illustrator for years and have just reinvested in my education in a new field, science illustration. Over the last year I spent a lot of money on my new degree, created a new body of work, and put a lot of thought into what the future holds for my career. As a working illustrator I must express my deep concern about the proposed changes to copyright law regarding orphan works. In my opinion these changes would devastate my industry and many like it, causing a fatal shift in control over the rights to use of images away from the creators.

When I first learned about how copyright law works, I found it exciting and empowering to know that by simply making art I had strong, clearly outlined rights without needing to register. I found these laws straightforward, and I was proud to know that such an elegant purposeful system was in place to protect the work that I, and people like me, had made. This level of copyright protection is crucial to the whole system, and the introduction of the orphan works amendments dramatically damages the system's foundation.

As to your questions about profit, registration and enforcement, my opinion is that the system in place works for the majority of these issues. Current copyright law gives artist control and protection that it adequate and substantive. By granting artists copyright over their work with the option to register they can choose which level of protection is adequate for their needs, but are protected without needing to take any action. Requiring artists to register their work if they want to maintain a copyright opens the door to predation on young artists who haven't yet learned the extent of the law. We need basic copyright to protect people at the entry level in these fields.

The world of commercial art is competitive, getting a footing usually requires years of practice and schooling. These are the challenges that face commercial artists, illustrators, and photographers; we don't need more by stripping away their rights to their work. The current proposal allows outside parties rights orphan works without adequately outlining what steps they must take to confirm the work "orphaned." This would allow for predatory action by malevolent parties, who wish to use work without paying for it.

If others feel that the current laws do not cover the needs of access to all who wish to legally use work that is actually orphaned then an amendment can be made without such sweeping, devastating changes to hardworking artists. It is a far more important matter to protect those who are trying to maintain a copyright, producing new creative work and contributing to the economy than to strip away their rights in favor of those seeking to gain access to work for free without creating it.

I thank you for your consideration and appreciate your giving my colleagues and me the opportunity to offer our input on this matter. I, and many I have spoken to, feel this matter is of the utmost importance and has large implications to our livelihood. Again, thank you, and I trust you will make the right decision to protect us.

-Reid Psaltis