July 21, 2015

To whom it may concern,

This letter is in response to the proposed new Next Great Copyright Act and the return of the Orphan Works Act. I am concerned about retaining my legal right to my work as an artist and the owner of a small business. I have been an artist all of my life, beginning with creating paintings, drawings, and clay and wood sculptures when I was a young child. I began formal art lessons from professional artists at the age of 7 and continued them through high school. I attended Virginia Commonwealth University as an art student and graduated from Salisbury University with a B.S. in Education. I have taught art all of my adult life for public and private schools. I am a professional artist, represented by several local galleries, as well as being a signature member of the Baltimore Watercolor Society, a member of the Delaware Watercolor Society, the Rehoboth Art League, The Art League of Ocean City, and a founding member of the Artists' Co-op in Salisbury, Maryland.

At this point I am selling my work through galleries and organizations and am painting full-time, relying on the payment for my work for my income. The passage of the Orphans Works Act will allow anyone to take my ideas and use them for their benefit without my consent. As I understand it, the new law will cause me to have to pay to prevent this from happening and will give me no legal recourse when someone takes my art, my creations, and uses them as they choose for their own profit. This is totally unreasonable! This is taking away my freedom of speech, since my art is my form of communication! The copyright laws are the laws by which my small business survives. My business depends on the fact that I can determine by whom my work is used. I need to be able to publish my work as I see fit in order to advertise it for upcoming shows, for announcing honors won (of which I have had many), and for any reason for which I see fit without it being stolen! It is MY WORK! Currently my work does not lose its value upon publication; it depends on publication to be sold, as in any other business. I urge you to vote against the proposed Next Great Copyright Act!

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