

Chapter 3¹

Duration of Copyright

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§301 · Preemption with respect to other laws²

(a) On and after January 1, 1978, all legal or equitable rights that are equivalent to any of the exclusive rights within the general scope of copyright as specified by section 106 in works of authorship that are fixed in a tangible medium of expression and come within the subject matter of copyright as specified by sections 102 and 103, whether created before or after that date and whether published or unpublished, are governed exclusively by this title. Thereafter, no person is entitled to any such right or equivalent right in any such work under the common law or statutes of any State.

(b) Nothing in this title annuls or limits any rights or remedies under the common law or statutes of any State with respect to—

(1) subject matter that does not come within the subject matter of copyright as specified by sections 102 and 103, including works of authorship not fixed in any tangible medium of expression; or

(2) any cause of action arising from undertakings commenced before January 1, 1978;

(3) activities violating legal or equitable rights that are not equivalent to any of the exclusive rights within the general scope of copyright as specified by section 106; or

(4) State and local landmarks, historic preservation, zoning, or building codes, relating to architectural works protected under section 102(a)(8).

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of section 303, and in accordance with chapter 14, no sound recording fixed before February 15, 1972, shall be subject to copyright under this title. With respect to sound recordings fixed before February 15, 1972, the preemptive provisions of subsection (a) shall apply to activities that are commenced on and after the date of enactment of the Classics Protection and Access Act. Nothing in this subsection may be construed to affirm or negate the preemption of rights and remedies pertaining to any cause of action arising from the nonsubscription broadcast transmission of sound recordings under the common law or statutes of any State for activities that do not qualify as covered activities under chapter 14 undertaken during the period between the date of enactment of the Classics Protection and Access Act and the date on which the term of prohibition on unauthorized acts under section 1401(a)(2) expires for such sound recordings. Any potential preemption of rights and remedies related to such activities undertaken during that period shall apply in all respects as it did the day before the date of enactment of the Classics Protection and Access Act.

(d) Nothing in this title annuls or limits any rights or remedies under any other Federal statute.

(e) The scope of Federal preemption under this section is not affected by the adherence of the United States to the Berne Convention or the satisfaction of obligations of the United States thereunder.

(f)(1) On or after the effective date set forth in section 610(a) of the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990, all legal or equitable rights that are equivalent to any of the rights conferred by section 106A with respect to works of visual art to which the rights conferred by section 106A apply are governed exclusively by section 106A and section 113(d) and the provisions of this title relating to such sections. Thereafter, no person is entitled to any such right or equivalent right in any work of visual art under the common law or statutes of any State.³

(2) Nothing in paragraph (1) annuls or limits any rights or remedies under the common law or statutes of any State with respect to—

(A) any cause of action from undertakings commenced before the effective date set forth in section 610(a) of the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990;

(B) activities violating legal or equitable rights that are not equivalent to any of the rights conferred by section 106A with respect to works of visual art; or

(C) activities violating legal or equitable rights which extend beyond the life of the author.

§ 302 · Duration of copyright: Works created on or after January 1, 1978⁴

(a) **IN GENERAL.**— Copyright in a work created on or after January 1, 1978, subsists from its creation and, except as provided by the following subsections, endures for a term consisting of the life of the author and 70 years after the author's death.

(b) **JOINT WORKS.**— In the case of a joint work prepared by two or more authors who did not work for hire, the copyright endures for a term consisting of the life of the last surviving author and 70 years after such last surviving author's death.

(c) **ANONYMOUS WORKS, PSEUDONYMOUS WORKS, AND WORKS MADE FOR HIRE.**— In the case of an anonymous work, a pseudonymous work, or a work made for hire, the copyright endures for a term of 95 years from the year of its first publication, or a term of 120 years from the year of its creation, whichever expires first. If, before the end of such term, the identity of one or more of the authors of an anonymous or pseudonymous work is revealed in the records of a registration made for that work under subsections (a) or (d) of section 408, or in the records provided by this subsection, the copyright in the work endures for the term specified by subsection (a) or (b), based on the life of the author or authors whose identity has been revealed. Any person having an interest in the copyright in an anonymous or pseudonymous work may at any time record, in records to be maintained by the Copyright Office for that purpose, a statement identifying one or more authors of the work; the statement shall also identify the person filing it, the nature of that person's interest, the source of the information

recorded, and the particular work affected, and shall comply in form and content with requirements that the Register of Copyrights shall prescribe by regulation.

(d) **RECORDS RELATING TO DEATH OF AUTHORS.**—Any person having an interest in a copyright may at any time record in the Copyright Office a statement of the date of death of the author of the copyrighted work, or a statement that the author is still living on a particular date. The statement shall identify the person filing it, the nature of that person's interest, and the source of the information recorded, and shall comply in form and content with requirements that the Register of Copyrights shall prescribe by regulation. The Register shall maintain current records of information relating to the death of authors of copyrighted works, based on such recorded statements and, to the extent the Register considers practicable, on data contained in any of the records of the Copyright Office or in other reference sources.

(e) **PRESUMPTION AS TO AUTHOR'S DEATH.**—After a period of 95 years from the year of first publication of a work, or a period of 120 years from the year of its creation, whichever expires first, any person who obtains from the Copyright Office a certified report that the records provided by subsection (d) disclose nothing to indicate that the author of the work is living, or died less than 70 years before, is entitled to the benefit of a presumption that the author has been dead for at least 70 years. Reliance in good faith upon this presumption shall be a complete defense to any action for infringement under this title.

§303 · Duration of copyright: Works created but not published or copyrighted before January 1, 1978⁵

(a) Copyright in a work created before January 1, 1978, but not theretofore in the public domain or copyrighted, subsists from January 1, 1978, and endures for the term provided by section 302. In no case, however, shall the term of copyright in such a work expire before December 31, 2002; and, if the work is published on or before December 31, 2002, the term of copyright shall not expire before December 31, 2047.

(b) The distribution before January 1, 1978, of a phonorecord shall not for any purpose constitute a publication of any musical work, dramatic work, or literary work embodied therein.

§304 · Duration of copyright: Subsisting copyrights⁶

(a) **COPYRIGHTS IN THEIR FIRST TERM ON JANUARY 1, 1978.**—

(1)(A) Any copyright, in the first term of which is subsisting on January 1, 1978, shall endure for 28 years from the date it was originally secured.

(B) In the case of—

(i) any posthumous work or of any periodical, cyclopedic, or other composite work upon which the copyright was originally secured by the proprietor thereof, or

(ii) any work copyrighted by a corporate body (otherwise than as assignee or licensee of the individual author) or by an employer for whom such work is made for hire, the proprietor of such copyright shall be entitled to a renewal and extension of the copyright in such work for the further term of 67 years.

(C) In the case of any other copyrighted work, including a contribution by an individual author to a periodical or to a cyclopedic or other composite work—

(i) the author of such work, if the author is still living,

(ii) the widow, widower, or children of the author, if the author is not living,

(iii) the author's executors, if such author, widow, widower, or children are not living, or

(iv) the author's next of kin, in the absence of a will of the author, shall be entitled to a renewal and extension of the copyright in such work for a further term of 67 years.

(2)(A) At the expiration of the original term of copyright in a work specified in paragraph (1)(B) of this subsection, the copyright shall endure for a renewed and extended further term of 67 years, which—

(i) if an application to register a claim to such further term has been made to the Copyright Office within 1 year before the expiration of the original term of copyright, and the claim is registered, shall vest, upon the beginning of such further term, in the proprietor of the copyright who is entitled to claim the renewal of copyright at the time the application is made; or

(ii) if no such application is made or the claim pursuant to such application is not registered, shall vest, upon the beginning of such further term, in the person or entity that was the proprietor of the copyright as of the last day of the original term of copyright.

(B) At the expiration of the original term of copyright in a work specified in paragraph (1)(C) of this subsection, the copyright shall endure for a renewed and extended further term of 67 years, which—

(i) if an application to register a claim to such further term has been made to the Copyright Office within 1 year before the expiration of the original term of copyright, and the claim is registered, shall vest, upon the beginning of such further term, in any person who is entitled under paragraph (1)(C) to the renewal and extension of the copyright at the time the application is made; or

(ii) if no such application is made or the claim pursuant to such application is not registered, shall vest, upon the beginning of such further term, in any person entitled under paragraph (1)(C), as of the last day of the original term of copyright, to the renewal and extension of the copyright.

(3)(A) An application to register a claim to the renewed and extended term of copyright in a work may be made to the Copyright Office—

(i) within 1 year before the expiration of the original term of copyright by any person entitled under paragraph (1)(B) or (C) to such further term of 67 years; and

(ii) at any time during the renewed and extended term by any person in whom such further term vested, under paragraph (2)(A) or (B), or by any successor or assign of such person, if the application is made in the name of such person.

(B) Such an application is not a condition of the renewal and extension of the copyright in a work for a further term of 67 years.

(4)(A) If an application to register a claim to the renewed and extended term of copyright in a work is not made within 1 year before the expiration of the original term of copyright in a work, or if the claim pursuant to such application is not registered, then a derivative work prepared under authority of a grant of a transfer or license of the copyright that is made before the expiration of the original term of copyright may continue to be used under the terms of the grant during the renewed and extended term of copyright without infringing the copyright, except that such use does not extend to the preparation during such renewed and extended term of other derivative works based upon the copyrighted work covered by such grant.

(B) If an application to register a claim to the renewed and extended term of copyright in a work is made within 1 year before its expiration, and the claim is registered, the certificate of such registration shall constitute prima facie evidence as to the validity of the copyright during its renewed and extended term and of the facts stated in the certificate. The evidentiary weight to be accorded the certificates of a registration of a renewed and extended term of copyright made after the end of that 1-year period shall be within the discretion of the court.

(b) COPYRIGHTS IN THEIR RENEWAL TERM AT THE TIME OF THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE SONNY BONO COPYRIGHT TERM EXTENSION ACT⁷—Any copyright still in its renewal term at the time that the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act becomes effective shall have a copyright term of 95 years from the date copyright was originally secured.⁸

(c) TERMINATION OF TRANSFERS AND LICENSES COVERING EXTENDED RENEWAL TERM.—In the case of any copyright subsisting in either its first or renewal term on January 1, 1978, other than a copyright in a work made for

hire, the exclusive or nonexclusive grant of a transfer or license of the renewal copyright or any right under it, executed before January 1, 1978, by any of the persons designated by subsection (a)(1)(C) of this section, otherwise than by will, is subject to termination under the following conditions:

(1) In the case of a grant executed by a person or persons other than the author, termination of the grant may be effected by the surviving person or persons who executed it. In the case of a grant executed by one or more of the authors of the work, termination of the grant may be effected, to the extent of a particular author's share in the ownership of the renewal copyright, by the author who executed it or, if such author is dead, by the person or persons who, under clause (2) of this subsection, own and are entitled to exercise a total of more than one-half of that author's termination interest.

(2) Where an author is dead, his or her termination interest is owned, and may be exercised, as follows:

(A) The widow or widower owns the author's entire termination interest unless there are any surviving children or grandchildren of the author, in which case the widow or widower owns one-half of the author's interest.

(B) The author's surviving children, and the surviving children of any dead child of the author, own the author's entire termination interest unless there is a widow or widower, in which case the ownership of one-half of the author's interest is divided among them.

(C) The rights of the author's children and grandchildren are in all cases divided among them and exercised on a per stirpes basis according to the number of such author's children represented; the share of the children of a dead child in a termination interest can be exercised only by the action of a majority of them.

(D) In the event that the author's widow or widower, children, and grandchildren are not living, the author's executor, administrator, personal representative, or trustee shall own the author's entire termination interest.

(3) Termination of the grant may be effected at any time during a period of five years beginning at the end of fifty-six years from the date copyright was originally secured, or beginning on January 1, 1978, whichever is later.

(4) The termination shall be effected by serving an advance notice in writing upon the grantee or the grantee's successor in title. In the case of a grant executed by a person or persons other than the author, the notice shall be signed by all of those entitled to terminate the grant under clause (1) of this subsection, or by their duly authorized agents. In the case of a grant executed by one or more of the authors of the work, the notice as to any one author's share shall be signed by that author or his or her duly authorized agent or, if that author is dead, by the number and proportion of the owners of his or her termination interest required under clauses (1) and (2) of this subsection, or by their duly authorized agents.

(A) The notice shall state the effective date of the termination, which shall fall within the five-year period specified by clause (3) of this subsection, or, in the case of a termination under subsection (d), within the five-year period specified by subsection (d)(2), and the notice shall be served not less than two or more than ten years before that date. A copy of the notice shall be recorded in the Copyright Office before the effective date of termination, as a condition to its taking effect.

(B) The notice shall comply, in form, content, and manner of service, with requirements that the Register of Copyrights shall prescribe by regulation.

(5) Termination of the grant may be effected notwithstanding any agreement to the contrary, including an agreement to make a will or to make any future grant.

(6) In the case of a grant executed by a person or persons other than the author, all rights under this title that were covered by the terminated grant revert, upon the effective date of termination, to all of those entitled to terminate the grant under clause (1) of this subsection. In the case of a grant executed by one or more of the authors of the work, all of a particular author's rights under this title that were covered by the terminated grant revert, upon the effective date of termination, to that author or, if that author is dead, to the persons owning his or her termination interest under clause (2) of this subsection, including those owners who did not join in signing the notice of termination under clause (4) of this subsection. In all cases the reversion of rights is subject to the following limitations:

(A) A derivative work prepared under authority of the grant before its termination may continue to be utilized under the terms of the grant after its termination, but this privilege does not extend to the preparation after the termination of other derivative works based upon the copyrighted work covered by the terminated grant.

(B) The future rights that will revert upon termination of the grant become vested on the date the notice of termination has been served as provided by clause (4) of this subsection.

(C) Where the author's rights revert to two or more persons under clause (2) of this subsection, they shall vest in those persons in the proportionate shares provided by that clause. In such a case, and subject to the provisions of subclause (D) of this clause, a further grant, or agreement to make a further grant, of a particular author's share with respect to any right covered by a terminated grant is valid only if it is signed by the same number and proportion of the owners, in whom the right has vested under this clause, as are required to terminate the grant under clause (2) of this subsection. Such further grant or agreement is effective with respect to all of the persons in whom the right it covers has vested under this subclause, including those who did not join in signing it. If any person dies after rights under

a terminated grant have vested in him or her, that person's legal representatives, legatees, or heirs at law represent him or her for purposes of this subclause.

(D) A further grant, or agreement to make a further grant, of any right covered by a terminated grant is valid only if it is made after the effective date of the termination. As an exception, however, an agreement for such a further grant may be made between the author or any of the persons provided by the first sentence of clause (6) of this subsection, or between the persons provided by subclause (C) of this clause, and the original grantee or such grantee's successor in title, after the notice of termination has been served as provided by clause (4) of this subsection.

(E) Termination of a grant under this subsection affects only those rights covered by the grant that arise under this title, and in no way affects rights arising under any other Federal, State, or foreign laws.

(F) Unless and until termination is effected under this subsection, the grant, if it does not provide otherwise, continues in effect for the remainder of the extended renewal term.

(d) **TERMINATION RIGHTS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (C) WHICH HAVE EXPIRED ON OR BEFORE THE EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE SONNY BONO COPYRIGHT TERM EXTENSION ACT.**— In the case of any copyright other than a work made for hire, subsisting in its renewal term on the effective date of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act⁹ for which the termination right provided in subsection (c) has expired by such date, where the author or owner of the termination right has not previously exercised such termination right, the exclusive or nonexclusive grant of a transfer or license of the renewal copyright or any right under it, executed before January 1, 1978, by any of the persons designated in subsection (a)(1)(C) of this section, other than by will, is subject to termination under the following conditions:

(1) The conditions specified in subsections (c) (1), (2), (4), (5), and (6) of this section apply to terminations of the last 20 years of copyright term as provided by the amendments made by the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act.

(2) Termination of the grant may be effected at any time during a period of 5 years beginning at the end of 75 years from the date copyright was originally secured.

§305 · Duration of copyright: Terminal date

All terms of copyright provided by sections 302 through 304 run to the end of the calendar year in which they would otherwise expire.

Chapter 3 • Notes

1. Private Law 92-60, 85 Stat. 857, effective December 15, 1971, states that:

[A]ny provision of law to the contrary notwithstanding, copyright is hereby granted to the trustees under the will of Mary Baker Eddy, their successors, and assigns, in the work “Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures” (entitled also in some editions “Science and Health” or “Science and Health; with a Key to the Scriptures”), by Mary Baker Eddy, including all editions thereof in English and translation heretofore published, or hereafter published by or on behalf of said trustees, their successors or assigns, for a term of seventy-five years from the effective date of this Act or from the date of first publication, whichever is later.

But cf. *United Christian Scientists v. Christian Science Board of Directors, First Church of Christ, Scientist*, 829 F.2d 1152, 4 USPQ2d 1177 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (holding Priv. L. 92-60, 85 Stat. 857, to be unconstitutional because it violates the Establishment Clause).

2. The Berne Convention Implementation Act of 1988 amended section 301 by adding at the end thereof subsection (e). Pub. L. No. 100-568, 102 Stat. 2853, 2857. In 1990, the Architectural Works Copyright Protection Act amended section 301(b) by adding at the end thereof paragraph (4). Pub. L. No. 101-650, 104 Stat. 5133, 5134. The Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 amended section 301 by adding at the end thereof subsection (f). Pub. L. No. 101-650, 104 Stat. 5089, 5131. In 1998, the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act amended section 301 by changing “February 15, 2047” to “February 15, 2067” each place it appeared in subsection (c). Pub. L. No. 105-298, 112 Stat. 2827.

In 2018, the Orrin G. Hatch–Bob Goodlatte Music Modernization Act amended section 301(c) in its entirety. Pub. L. No. 115-264, 132 Stat. 3676, 3728.

3. The Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990, which added subsection (f), states, “Subject to subsection (b) and except as provided in subsection (c), this title and the amendments made by this title take effect 6 months after the date of the enactment of this Act,” that is, 6 months after December 1, 1990. Pub. L. No. 101-650, 104 Stat. 5089, 5132. See also note 40, chapter 1.

4. In 1998, the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act amended section 302 by substituting “70” for “fifty,” “95” for “seventy-five,” and “120” for “one hundred” each place they appeared. Pub. L. No. 105-298, 112 Stat. 2827. This change was effective October 27, 1998. *Id.*

5. In 1997, section 303 was amended by adding subsection (b). Pub. L. No. 105-80, 111 Stat. 1529, 1534. In 1998, the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act amended section 303 by substituting “December 31, 2047” for “December 31, 2027.” Pub. L. No. 105-298, 112 Stat. 2827. The Copyright Cleanup, Clarification, and Corrections Act of 2010 amended section 303(b) to substitute “any musical work, dramatic work, or literary work” for “the musical work.” Pub. L. No. 111-295, 124 Stat. 3180, 3181.

6. The Copyright Renewal Act of 1992 amended section 304 by substituting a new subsection (a) and by making a conforming amendment in the matter preceding paragraph (1) of subsection (c). Pub. L. No. 102-307, 106 Stat. 264. The Act, as amended by the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act, states that the renewal and extension of a copyright for a further term of 67 years “shall have the same effect with respect to any grant, before the effective date of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act [October 27, 1998], of a transfer

or license of the further term as did the renewal of a copyright before the effective date of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act [October 27, 1998] under the law in effect at the time of such grant.” The Act also states that the 1992 amendments “shall apply only to those copyrights secured between January 1, 1964, and December 31, 1977. Copyrights secured before January 1, 1964, shall be governed by the provisions of section 304(a) of title 17, United States Code, as in effect on the day before ... [enactment on June 26, 1992], except each reference to forty-seven years in such provisions shall be deemed to be 67 years.” Pub. L. No. 102-307, 106 Stat. 264, 266, as amended by the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act, Pub. L. No. 105-298, 112 Stat. 2827, 2828.

In 1998, the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act amended section 304 by substituting “67” for “47” wherever it appeared in subsection (a), by substituting a new subsection (b), and by adding subsection (d) at the end thereof. Pub. L. No. 105-298, 112 Stat. 2827. That Act also amended subsection 304(c) by deleting “by his widow or her widower and his or her children or grandchildren” from the first sentence of paragraph (2), by adding subparagraph (D) at the end of paragraph (2) and by inserting “or, in the case of a termination under subsection (d), within the five-year period specified by subsection (d)(2),” into the first sentence of subparagraph (4)(A). *Id.*

7. In 1998, the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act amendment to subsection 304(b) completely deleted the previous language that was originally part of the 1976 Copyright Act. Pub. L. No. 105-298, 112 Stat. 2827. That earlier statutory language continues to be relevant for calculating the term of protection for copyrights commencing between September 19, 1906, and December 31, 1949. The 1976 Copyright Act extended the terms for those copyrights by 20 years, provided they were in their renewal term between December 31, 1976, and December 31, 1977. The deleted language states:

The duration of any copyright, the renewal term of which is subsisting at any time between December 31, 1976, and December 31, 1977, inclusive, or for which renewal registration is made between December 31, 1976, and December 31, 1977, inclusive, is extended to endure for a term of seventy-five years from the date copyright was originally secured.

The effective date of this provision was October 19, 1976. That effective date provision is contained in Appendix A, herein, as section 102 of the Transitional and Supplementary Provisions of the Copyright Act of 1976. Copyright Act of 1976, Pub. L. No. 94-553, 90 Stat. 2541, 2598.

In addition, prior to the 1976 Copyright Act, Congress enacted a series of nine interim extensions for works whose copyright protection began between September 19, 1906, and December 31, 1918, if they were in their renewal terms. Without these interim extensions, copyrights commencing during that time period would have otherwise expired after 56 years, at the end of their renewal terms, between September 19, 1962, and December 31, 1976. The nine Acts authorizing the interim extensions are as follows, in chronological order:

Pub. L. No. 87-668, 76 Stat. 555 (extending copyrights from September 19, 1962, to December 31, 1965)

Pub. L. No. 89-142, 79 Stat. 581 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1967)

Pub. L. No. 90-141, 81 Stat. 464 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1968)

Pub. L. No. 90-416, 82 Stat. 397 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1969)

Pub. L. No. 91-147, 83 Stat. 360 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1970)

Pub. L. No. 91-555, 84 Stat. 1441 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1971)

Pub. L. No. 92-170, 85 Stat. 490 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1972)

Pub. L. No. 92-566, 86 Stat. 1181 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1974)

Pub. L. No. 93-573, 88 Stat. 1873 (extending copyrights to December 31, 1976)

8. The effective date of the Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act is October 27, 1998.

9. See note 8, *supra*.