Dear United States Copyright Office,

I am a cartoonist. I do freelance work primarily for the New Yorker magazine, but also for The Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business Review and Barron's.

The business of being a cartoonist is based on the presumption that I own the copyright to my work the moment I create it. Because of that, publications pay me for the right to publish my work *once* while I retain ownership of the work. All subsequent publication or licensing of the work is paid to me as the owner of the original work.

Cartoonists are paid relatively little for first time publication rights (anywhere from $150 to $700). And due to budgetary constraints, publications are using fewer cartoons. That $700 payday doesn't come around all that often – on average, a few times a month. So most of my income comes from the relicensing of my original works. The majority of my licensing income comes from The New Yorker's Cartoon Bank, which relicenses New Yorker cartoons to third parties. My arrangement with The New Yorker's Cartoon Bank is based on current copyright law, which requires my permission for The New Yorker to relicense my works.

The most significant challenge for me as an artist/individual is having the power to negotiate with larger entities such as publications or syndicates which have entire legal departments at their disposal. Without the copyright law supporting my right to the original work, I have no basis for negotiating with those entities who have far greater resources at their disposal than I do. You can see that this is an issue of inequality. The large corporate entity vs. the individual. Without my rights to the original work, I lose my power to negotiate.

This is also an issue of employment. Losing the rights to the original work would mean a drastic reduction in my income, effectively putting me out of a job. It's amazing to me that the very folks who talk the most about the need to create jobs for Americans – Congress – are the very ones who are preparing to pass legislation that will eliminate the jobs for an important and valued segment of the labor force.

The most significant challenge to monetizing and licensing my work is preventing third parties from merely using my work without my permission by scanning the published work as an image file, or taking a screenshot from the computer, and simply proceeding to use it for whatever purpose – blog, powerpoint presentation, newsletter, what have you. The current copyright law at least acts as a deterrent in that a third party can be sued for using the work without my permission.

This is an issue which touches on both inequality and employment, two of the major talking points for members of congress, and is an opportunity for them to put their money where their mouth is.

Best regards,

Kaamran Hafeez