July 23, 2015

Dear Ms. Pallante and the Copyright Office:

I'm an illustrator, writer, and web comics artist. I'm very concerned about the legislation congress wishes to pass completely overhauling the existing copyright system.

For me, most of the income that I produce as an artist is generated by the sale of merchandise created from my work such as books, art-prints, and other merchandise. I sell these items to individuals over the internet, and at various shows and conventions I attend. I'm able to do this because I own the copyright to all the work I produce, and that copyright is granted to me automatically as I create my work.

The new copyright system being pushed argues that I don't own the copyright to my work upon creation. If these new laws pass, I would essentially have to buy my own copyright from private registries. If I don't, all my works would become "orphaned", I run the very likely risk of other companies or individuals simply removing the copyright marks from my images, and then registering those images as their own. This makes no sense. Why would I have to purchase the rights to my work from my own competitors? As far as I can tell, other industries and professionals don't have to do this. Additionally, the new system gives an unfair advantage to thieves and companies with large financial power, who can then buy up the rights to images that have already been published online before the actual owners are able to afford the money and time to do anything to protect their work.

The new laws being proposed have the power to completely destroy my ability to make a living off my work. It simply wouldn't be financially viable for me, in terms or time and money, to register each and every one of my works with a private registry whether that be works I'm producing, or works I'm made in the past. While creators can make good incomes from the sale and licensing of their works, it can take years for that sort of income to be reliable and lucrative enough to live off of. For those of us who self-publish our works, whether they be books , images, or merchandise that we reproduce, the ownership of our own copyright guarantees an inherit protection of our work from the abuse, theft, or copyright infringement from other individuals or companies. Copyright ownership should be kept inherent to creators and in the rightful hands of creators, except in cases where owners of copyright agree to sell or give away that ownership. Copyright law was established to protect the creations of people. It shouldn't be corrupted for the benefit of companies looking to create a way to legally steal those rights.

Thank you,

Jesse Gilbert
Freelance Illustrator and Writer