July 22, 2015

U. S. Congress,

Revisions to the U. S. Copyright Law dealing with "Orphan Works"

Dear Congressmen/women,

The proposed changes to the Copyright Law of 1976 would steal the livelihood of men and women engaged in creative artworks, photography, film and many other types of visual works. These people are currently protected by copyrights; but those copyrights will be nulified by the classification of "Orphan Works." Many so-called orphan works have been stolen by unscrupulous dealers or publishers who simply removed the owner's name and altered the work slightly. This is already happening to an alarming degree. Even non-professional works such as people's vacation photos have been stolen and used in advertising. Anything published on the web is subject to theft.

The proposed law would simply do away with all protection for visual works and give the thieves carte blanche. The situation is bad enough for a vacationing family, but for those who make their living producing visual works, photos, illustrations, paintings, films, etc. would find themselves robbed of their due payment for their work.

This theft is currently being justified by saying that these works are so valuable that they just have to be widely available to the public. Yet the perpetrators deny that the works have any value to those who created them. These are their livelihood. To allow them to be stolen without payment is to steal the only product the artisans have to sell: their creative products. Copyright was designed by the writers of the Constitution to protect those products. This change is therefore unconstitutional.

It is also in violation of the present "Fair Use" rules: Obviously, if any or all visual works can be stolen for use by anyone despite their copyright protections, the rule of "Special Cases" is being violated. It also violates the artist's right to decide how his/her work will be used and by whom. It will also unreasonably prejudice the legitamate interests of the artist to own and make a living from the sale of his own work.

Please vote against this unlawful grab. Provide for enforcement of an artist's right to his/her work without threat of theft. Many artists depend on web pages to sell their works. Please protect our right to advertise our products.

Kathryn L. Bell