Re: The Next Great Copyright Act

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing to respectfully share our responses to the proposed changes in the copyright law for artists. I, Sherrie McGraw and my husband, David A. Leffel have been professional fine artists for 36 years and 50 years respectively. We both have made our livings by selling our paintings and drawings and teaching art at the legendary Art Students League of New York and at various art institutions, including Georgetown University, American University, Brigham Young University and the Academy of Art University in San Francisco where I was recently awarded an Honorary Doctorate. After my retrospective at the Butler Institute of American Art, I was also awarded their highest honor, the Medal of Honor for Lifetime Achievement in American Art, following such former recipients as art legends, Leo Castelli and Louise Nevelson. David is revered as a modern-day Rembrandt, having unearthed the knowledge that this old master understood. A full-length documentary is now being done on David to capture the extraordinary life of one of the most important artists of our time. We are both oil painters primarily, working in the chiaroscuro manner championed by Caravaggio, Van Dyck and Rembrandt. Our reputations extend worldwide.

Changing the copyright laws in a way that would remove protection of our rights to determine how and where our images are used would directly affect our incomes, as it would allow other businesses to profit from our work to enhance their businesses' images, in effect stealing money from our pockets to line those of big corporations. As it is now, businesses prey on artists that have been weakened by the recent downturn in the art market by promising increased exposure, when in reality, using artists' artwork to promote their products benefits these corporations, much more than it would ever benefit the artists. If the proposed changes go into effect, all the hard work and capitol that we have put into developing our reputations would virtually evaporate.

Copyright laws are not some esoteric issues; for us, they are the very basis of our business. Once we create a one-of-kind painting or a drawing, the copyrights to these works ARE the products we license. Our work does not lose its value upon publication in an art magazine or a show catalogue; rather, it becomes part of our business inventory. And in this digital era, our inventory is more valuable to us than ever before.

I urge you to please let us retain the copyrights to work that is the result of many decades of devotion, hard work and study. Our very livelihoods are dependent on it.

Thank you,
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