



copyright alliance

Connecting creators · Protecting creative work

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
172 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
722 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Graves  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
House Committee on Appropriations  
2442 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Legislative Branch  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1114 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

April 15, 2016

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

The Copyright Alliance writes to express support for the Copyright Office's Provisional Information Technology Modernization Plan ("IT Plan") and to urge appropriators to press the Copyright Office to implement the Plan as soon as reasonably possible. Modernizing the U.S. Copyright Office IT system and giving the Copyright Office control over its IT system is essential to an effective 21<sup>st</sup> Century Copyright Office.

The Copyright Alliance is a non-profit, public interest and educational organization that counts as its members over 15,000 individual creators and organizations across the spectrum of copyright disciplines. What unites these individuals and organizations is their reliance on the copyright law to protect their freedom to pursue a livelihood and career based on creativity and innovation and to protect their investment in the creation and dissemination of copyrighted works for the public to enjoy. The copyright law is critical not only to their success and prosperity, but also the short and long-term success of the U.S. economy.

As the Office responsible for administering all matters relating to copyright, few other government offices are more important to the growth of creativity and commercial activity in our nation than the U.S. Copyright Office. Within the copyright ecosystem, the Copyright Office plays a pivotal role in the registration of creators' works and the recordation of documents pertaining to those works. The ability of our nation's independent creators and the businesses that support their work to promptly register and record copyright interests with the Office, and of the public to obtain copyright information that helps them license copyrighted works, creates new industries and spurs the economy, which, in turn, advances our global competitiveness and technological leadership.

While we appreciate the complexities and understand how long a project like the one proposed in the IT Plan takes to complete, and the importance of building a new system correctly the first time, we also would like to see the project’s timeline shortened and begin earlier to the extent it is possible. Many of the technological issues our members face with registration and recordation are acute, so the sooner new or improved systems can be deployed by the Copyright Office, the sooner users of the Office’s services—creators, members of the public, and Congress—can reap the benefits of IT modernization.

Appropriations are an important and proper source of funding for modernization since the public is the ultimate beneficiary of copyright information retained and disseminated by the Office and, by extension, of a modernized Copyright Office. Copyright registration benefits the public by providing it with a searchable database of copyright registration and ownership information, which enables database users to determine authorship and other information about works, contact owners for licensing or other usage, and determine whether works are in the public domain and freely useable. Moreover, a modern, robust copyright registration and recordation system will facilitate additional business investment and entrepreneurship along with reducing transaction costs and other marketplace inefficiencies, leading to long-term economic growth and cultural benefits. We urge, however, that any funds appropriated for the IT Plan are prevented from being diverted to the general Library of Congress budget or to other projects. We also acknowledge that the IT Plan would require “front-loading” of taxpayer support, but will ultimately result in cost savings and incentivize registration and recordation, thus increasing overall revenues from fees.

We thank the Subcommittee for its interest in modernizing the U.S. Copyright Office. Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or answer any questions regarding our views in this matter.

Sincerely,

Keith Kupferschmid  
CEO and President  
Copyright Alliance

Cc: Senate Subcommittee on Legislative Branch members  
House Subcommittee on Legislative Branch members  
Hon. Bob Goodlatte, House Judiciary Committee Chairman  
Hon. John Conyers, Jr., House Judiciary Committee Ranking Member  
Hon. Charles Grassley, Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman  
Hon. Patrick Leahy, Senate Judiciary Committee Ranking Member