



January 31, 2017

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
2138 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee
2426 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Copyright Office Reform Policy Proposal

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers,

Americans for Tax Reform and Digital Liberty would like to thank you for your efforts to modernize the U.S. Copyright Office. In regards to your policy statement on Copyright Office reform released for comment, we are broadly supportive.

In particular we support the **Copyright Office breaking from the Library of Congress, remaining part of the Legislative Branch, and the Register being nominated by the President and appointed with Congressional consent.** This will give the Office more discretion to modernize and meet the needs of the digital environment.

In the United States, the copyright industry grew 3.9 percent from 2009 to 2013, which is 70 percent faster than the overall economy. It makes sense for a country whose copyright industries made up \$1.2 trillion of GDP, 6.88 percent of the economy, and employed 5.5 million people in 2015 to have an innovative registration process for copyrights as well.

In 2008, the office introduced the Electronic Office Registration System (eCO), which enabled users to submit works in digital form. Updates to this system are somewhat in process; however, there are many issues that need to be resolved for copyright to function effectively.

In the eCO, users can only submit a few classes of work digitally; many works still have to be submitted in physical form. For example renewals and corrections can't be submitted digitally; literary works, visual, sound recordings and motion pictures can be.

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In terms of searchability, the eCO returns equally poor results. The Software & Information Industry Association tested the user friendliness of the Office's database; they tried finding records of the iconic movie Godfather. Within the first 25 results, neither the movie nor the books were displayed. Considering that it's already hard to find a record of well-known movies, looking for records of specific, not well-known movies or book, will be a struggle for any user.

Since the introduction of eCo little has been done to improve or update it. Electronic versions of all classes of work should be adequate for recordation, at this time and age, especially for the Copyright Office.

Although the average registration process times have been reduced through the eCO, much of the information still needs to be keyed in by office staff. As a result the average time it take to register a copyright has been between 12 and 18 months. This has lead to tremendous delays. In 2012, there were over 560,000 registration requests. Meanwhile there were already 183,676 registrations pending, and at the beginning of 2013, 194,698 registrations were still pending.

As a separate entity with a nominated and confirmed Register, the Copyright Office will be better able to direct its budget for measures to automate the filing process and shift more focus to digital records and registration. The Copyright Office should have the discretion to update own IT structure.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this proposal, and look forward to working with you on future policy.

Onward,

Grover G. Norquist
President
Americans for Tax Reform

Kate McAuliffe
Executive Director
Digital Liberty