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January 30, 2017

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
House Judiciary Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Conyers
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

On behalf of over 250,000 supporters and activists across the nation, the Center for Individual Freedom (CFIF) applauds your proposal to modernize the United States Copyright Office so that it can meet the challenges of the 21st Century. Specifically, we support removing the Copyright Office from within the Library of Congress's organizational structure, making the Register of Copyrights a presidentially appointed, Senate confirmed position. We also support codifying the Copyright Office's autonomy from the Library over copyright policy, its budget, technology and staff, subject to Congressional oversight.

Strong copyright protections constitute a core component of the American economy and its creative community. It's not by coincidence that the U.S. stands unrivaled as the most creative, innovative, prosperous, powerful, and influential nation in human history, while also traditionally maintaining some of the world's strongest intellectual property (IP) protections, including copyright. Rather, that's a causal relationship. Our Founding Fathers specifically protected copyright as a fundamental, natural property right in the text of the Constitution, and today copyright-related industries - particularly creative industries - dominate the globe, contributing well over \$1 trillion to U.S. GDP, and account for an estimated 5.5 million jobs. Importantly, those industries also remain a significant export sector that continues to grow.

The Copyright Office plays a crucial role in facilitating this thriving market by administering the registration and recordation systems, and advising Congress, the courts and others on policy as it relates to both domestic and international copyright matters. Because the Office is housed within the Library of Congress, which has its own significant challenges and responsibilities on which to focus, however, the Copyright Office has struggled to keep pace with the digital economy. This, despite repeated calls for modernization by Copyright Office staff and the Government Accountability Office.

Accordingly, a Congressional modernization effort is critical, and should include the following reforms: (1) removing the Copyright Office from within the Library's organizational structure; (2) having the President appoint the Register with consent from the U.S. Senate; and (3) ensuring the Office can continue to deliver any and all policy advice directly to Congress, free of review, and manage its own resources, staff and technology.

Given the enormous and growing importance of copyright industries, we welcome legislation to modernize the Copyright Office, and your proposal constitutes an important and positive first step. Your proposal would not only constitute a bipartisan accomplishment for Congress, but would also mean a victory for American consumers, creators and innovators. We at CFIF applaud your proposal and respectfully encourage you to see it through. Thank you very much for your attention to this extremely important matter.

Sincerely,

Timothy Lee
Senior Vice President of Legal and Public Affairs