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To: FN-OMB-IntellectualProperty
Cc: info@copyrightalliance.org
Subject: Copyright Alliance
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The Copyright Alliance has informed me of this welcome invitation from the Obama Administration to share my thoughts on my rights as a creator. . .

I started painting shortly after 9/11 -- a time when many of us re-examined our lives. I realized I wasn't fulfilling my artistic talents, and certainly not doing something that made my heart sing. I've been a full-time painter since then and, let me tell you, this is NOT a profession for the feint of heart! It has been a long, sometimes daunting and frustrating journey, but it has its rewards. I paint saltwater fish from my SW Florida region. A few years ago I also began a retro, mid-century styled series of paintings that capture pretty, all-American girls in a variety of settings. My wife is regularly my model and we work as a team -- she left her corporate career behind a few years ago to help me further mine. We don't have an extremely lucrative business model, but we do what we love.

That said, I'm sure you can imagine how important my creative rights are to maintain and protect. I'm not doing this for someone else to reap the rewards of my efforts. My work is my work and it should continue to be guarded. For each painting I create, I register it with the US Copyright Office. I take on the extra expense of doing this to ensure that my rights are protected. Even still, every time I send a digital file via e-mail, or release a file to a vendor, or post something on my own website, I have concern that someone might utilize it in a non-intended, and certainly non-authorized manner. I'm particularly concerned about how our US copyright laws are in danger of being irrelevant or unrecognized in other countries. I have heard horror stories from fellow artists who have had their artwork 'stolen' by entities in China or India, for example, countries that aren't required to adhere to US laws for copyright protection. What artist has the resources to deal with that legal quagmire?!? The digital world we live in brings a lot of anxiety to artists. If I am put in a position to legally challenge a copyright infringement, I will incur legal fees that are definitely not within my budget, and such 'fights' will require time away from focusing on my own business, which is to create art, attempt to sell it and actually survive financially. I have heard from too many artist friends who are in legal battles to salvage their own rights to their own artwork, only to be bullied by large corporations determined to intimidate and hope that artists will just give up because they know we don't have deep pockets. America was founded on the belief that opportunities exist in our great country if you work hard and apply yourself. It's a shame to think that the ones who are doing the correct things and are trying to make an honest living should be penalized because our laws have potential loopholes or are not strong enough to sustain the goals for which they were originally designed.

Please do whatever is possible to ensure that copyright laws are strengthened and supported in our legal system, and that inter-country laws are strengthened and adhered to, particularly in this ever-changing and growing digital age. Thank you for listening to my comments.

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