



Thursday, December 11, 2014

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner
United States House of Representatives
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-4905

Dear Congressman Sensenbrenner:

We are writing to you today to ask you to support the Copyright and Marriage Equality Act (H.R.5617). Same-sex couples deserve the same right and opportunity to receive copyright ownership rights in the result of their partner's death as married persons have.

The Wisconsin LGBT Chamber of Commerce, which represents more than 250 LGBT-owned and allied businesses and organizations from around the state, wants to ensure that all individuals are given an equal opportunity to inherit copyright ownership rights in order to protect their loved one's hard work.

H.R. 5617 would change federal rights under the US Copyright Act from a place of residence rule to a place of celebration rule. This bill would affect a number of rights granted to widows and widowers of authors under the Copyright Act. Widows and widowers receive copyright ownership rights in automatic renewals for works published before 1978, giving them control over things like publishing, performance and adaptations of their deceased spouse's work for an additional 67 years beyond the original term.

Widows and widowers can also terminate certain transfers of rights made by the author during the author's life, bringing control of those rights back to the spouse.

The existing definition in the US Copyright Act determines spousal status by the law of the author's domicile at death. This bill proposes to amend that Act to change that to the law of the state where the author was married. For authors married outside of the United States, the marriage would be considered valid if any state recognizes the marriage.

We hope that you will call upon the Judiciary Subcommittee on Courts, Intellectual Property and the Internet, where you sit, to bring up this bill as quickly as possible so that individuals in same-sex relationships have an equal opportunity to protect the copyright ownership rights that rightfully belong to the author's spouse.

Sincerely,

Jason Rae
Executive Director
Wisconsin LGBT Chamber