

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 14, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Your decision to abruptly remove Shira Perlmutter, the Register of Copyrights and director of the U.S. Copyright Office of the Library of Congress, is unlawful and reckless. It threatens the longstanding independence and integrity of the Copyright Office, which plays a vital role in our economy. You are acting beyond your power and contrary to the intent of Congress as you seek to erode the legal and institutional independence of offices explicitly designed to operate outside the reach of partisan influence.

As enshrined in law, the authority to appoint – and thus remove – the Register of Copyrights belongs solely to the Librarian of Congress, who you fired without cause just days ago even though she had one more year left in her 10-year term.¹ Congress vested this responsibility with the Senate-confirmed Librarian to ensure that the Copyright Office remains an expert and nonpartisan body free from undue political influence and interference.

The Register of Copyrights plays a central role in shaping federal copyright policy, pursuant to its statutory responsibility to “[c]onduct studies” and “[a]dvise Congress on national and international issues relating to copyright.” The Copyright Office’s independence from political influence is particularly important as we confront complex issues surrounding the intersection of copyright law and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.² Your dismissal of Ms. Perlmutter, which occurred one day after the Copyright Office’s publication of a report questioning the legal bounds of applying the fair use doctrine to training artificial intelligence models on copyrighted materials, also raises grave concerns that your Administration moved to remove Ms. Perlmutter to satisfy commercial or political interests.³

The Copyright Office, as part of the broader intellectual property system supporting American innovation, must remain independent. Undermining that independence for political or commercial gain threatens to do lasting damage not only to the Office itself, but to the rights of artists, creators, and innovators across the country. The abrupt removal of Ms. Perlmutter without cause weakens both the integrity of the Office she leads and the public’s confidence in the policymaking process.

¹ 17 U.S.C. § 701(a)

² 17 U.S.C. § 701(b)(1), (b)(4)

³ U.S. Copyright Office, *Copyright and Artificial Intelligence Part 3: Generative AI Training*, (May 9, 2025), <https://copyright.gov/ai/Copyright-and-Artificial-Intelligence-Part-3-Generative-AI-Training-Report-Pre-Publication-Version.pdf>.

We therefore urge you to immediately reinstate the Librarian of Congress, Carla Hayden, the only official authorized by statute to appoint or remove the Register of Copyrights, as well as rescind your directive to remove Ms. Perlmutter as Register of Copyrights. Doing so swiftly would restore much-needed public confidence in the Library of Congress and reaffirm the independence of the Copyright Office, as envisioned by Congress and upheld by Presidents on a bipartisan basis.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam B. Schiff", written over a horizontal line.

Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mazie K. Hirono", written over a horizontal line.

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dick Durbin", written over a horizontal line.

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Coons", written over a horizontal line.

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sheldon Whitehouse", written over a horizontal line.

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Welch", written over a horizontal line.

Peter Welch
United States Senator