

Editorial Notes

REFERENCES IN TEXT

The date of the enactment of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, referred to in subsecs. (d)(3)(A) and (h)(3), is the date of enactment of Pub. L. 103-465, which was approved Dec. 8, 1994.

Section 101(d)(15) of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, referred to in subsec. (e)(1)(D)(i), is classified to section 3511(d)(15) of Title 19, Customs Duties.

AMENDMENTS

1998—Subsec. (h)(1)(A) to (E). Pub. L. 105-304, §102(c)(1), added subpars. (A) to (E) and struck out former subpars. (A) and (B) which read as follows:

“(A) a nation adhering to the Berne Convention or a WTO member country; or

“(B) subject to a Presidential proclamation under subsection (g).”

Subsec. (h)(3). Pub. L. 105-304, §102(c)(2), amended par. (3) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (3) read as follows: “The term ‘eligible country’ means a nation, other than the United States, that—

“(A) becomes a WTO member country after the date of the enactment of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act;

“(B) on such date of enactment is, or after such date of enactment becomes, a member of the Berne Convention; or

“(C) after such date of enactment becomes subject to a proclamation under subsection (g).

For purposes of this section, a nation that is a member of the Berne Convention on the date of the enactment of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act shall be construed to become an eligible country on such date of enactment.”

Subsec. (h)(6)(E). Pub. L. 105-304, §102(c)(3), added subpar. (E).

Subsec. (h)(8)(B)(i). Pub. L. 105-304, §102(c)(4), inserted “of which” before “the majority” and struck out “of eligible countries” after “domiciliaries”.

Subsec. (h)(9). Pub. L. 105-304, §102(c)(5), struck out par. (9) which read as follows: “The terms ‘WTO Agreement’ and ‘WTO member country’ have the meanings given those terms in paragraphs (9) and (10), respectively, of section 2 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act.”

1997—Subsec. (d)(3)(A). Pub. L. 105-80, §2(1), amended subpar. (A) generally. Prior to amendment, subpar. (A) read as follows: “In the case of a derivative work that is based upon a restored work and is created—

“(i) before the date of the enactment of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act, if the source country of the derivative work is an eligible country on such date, or

“(ii) before the date of adherence or proclamation, if the source country of the derivative work is not an eligible country on such date of enactment,

a reliance party may continue to exploit that work for the duration of the restored copyright if the reliance party pays to the owner of the restored copyright reasonable compensation for conduct which would be subject to a remedy for infringement but for the provisions of this paragraph.”

Subsec. (e)(1)(B)(ii). Pub. L. 105-80, §2(2), struck out at end “Such list shall also be published in the Federal Register on an annual basis for the first 2 years after the applicable date of restoration.”

Subsec. (h)(2), (3). Pub. L. 105-80, §2(3), (4), amended pars. (2) and (3) generally. Prior to amendment, pars. (2) and (3) read as follows:

“(2) The ‘date of restoration’ of a restored copyright is the later of—

“(A) the date on which the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property referred to in section 101(d)(15) of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act enters into force with respect to the United States, if the source country of the restored work is a nation adhering to the Berne Convention or a WTO member country on such date; or

“(B) the date of adherence or proclamation, in the case of any other source country of the restored work.

“(3) The term ‘eligible country’ means a nation, other than the United States, that is a WTO member country, adheres to the Berne Convention, or is subject to a proclamation under subsection (g).”

1996—Subsec. (h)(3). Pub. L. 104-295 substituted “subsection (g)” for “section 104A(g)”.

1994—Pub. L. 103-465 substituted “Copyright in restored works” for “Copyright in certain motion pictures” as section catchline and amended text generally, substituting present provisions for provisions restoring copyright in certain motion pictures and providing for effective date of protection as well as use of previously owned copies.

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1998 AMENDMENT

Subsec. (h)(1)(A), (B), (E), (3)(A), (B), (E) of this section and amendment by section 102(c)(4), (5) of Pub. L. 105-304 effective Oct. 28, 1998, except as otherwise provided, subsec. (h)(1)(C), (3)(C) of this section effective Mar. 6, 2002, and subsec. (h)(1)(D), (3)(D) of this section and amendment by section 102(c)(3) of Pub. L. 105-304 effective May 20, 2002, see section 105(a), (b)(1)(C), (D), (2)(D)-(F) of Pub. L. 105-304, set out as a note under section 101 of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE

Section effective on the date the North American Free Trade Agreement enters into force with respect to the United States (Jan. 1, 1994), see section 335(a) of Pub. L. 103-182, formerly set out in an Effective Date of 1993 Amendment note under section 1052 of Title 15, Commerce and Trade.

Executive Documents

URUGUAY ROUND AGREEMENTS: ENTRY INTO FORCE

The Uruguay Round Agreements, including the World Trade Organization Agreement and agreements annexed to that Agreement, as referred to in section 3511(d) of Title 19, Customs Duties, entered into force with respect to the United States on Jan. 1, 1995. See note set out under section 3511 of Title 19.

§ 105. Subject matter of copyright: United States Government works

(a) IN GENERAL.—Copyright protection under this title is not available for any work of the United States Government, but the United States Government is not precluded from receiving and holding copyrights transferred to it by assignment, bequest, or otherwise.

(b) COPYRIGHT PROTECTION OF CERTAIN WORKS.—Subject to subsection (c), the covered author of a covered work owns the copyright to that covered work.

(c) USE BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.—

(1) SECRETARY OF DEFENSE AUTHORITY.—With respect to a covered author who produces a covered work in the course of employment at a covered institution described in subparagraphs (A) through (K) of subsection (d)(2) and subparagraph (L) of such subsection when the Coast Guard is operating as a service in the Navy, the Secretary of Defense may direct the covered author to provide the Federal Government with an irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide, nonexclusive license to reproduce, distribute, perform, or display such covered work for purposes of the United States Government.

(2) SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT IN WHICH THE COAST GUARD IS OPERATING WHEN IT IS NOT

OPERATING AS A SERVICE IN THE NAVY AUTHORITY.—With respect to a covered author who produces a covered work in the course of employment at the covered institution described in subsection (d)(2)(L), the Secretary of the Department in which the Coast Guard is operating when it is not operating as a service in the Navy may direct the covered author to provide the Federal Government with an irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide, nonexclusive license to reproduce, distribute, perform, or display such covered work for purposes of the United States Government.

(3) DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE AUTHORITY.—With respect to a covered author who produces a covered work in the course of employment at the covered institution described in subsection (d)(2)(M), the Director of National Intelligence may direct the covered author to provide the Federal Government with an irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide, nonexclusive license to reproduce, distribute, perform, or display such covered work for purposes of the United States Government.

(4) SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY.—With respect to a covered author who produces a covered work in the course of employment at the covered institution described in subsection (d)(2)(N), the Secretary of Transportation may direct the covered author to provide the Federal Government with an irrevocable, royalty-free, worldwide, nonexclusive license to reproduce, distribute, perform, or display such covered work for purposes of the United States Government.

(d) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) COVERED AUTHOR.—The term “covered author” means a civilian member of the faculty of a covered institution.

(2) COVERED INSTITUTION.—The term “covered institution” means the following:

- (A) National Defense University.
- (B) United States Military Academy.
- (C) Army War College.
- (D) United States Army Command and General Staff College.
- (E) United States Naval Academy.
- (F) Naval War College.
- (G) Naval Postgraduate School.
- (H) Marine Corps University.
- (I) United States Air Force Academy.
- (J) Air University.
- (K) Defense Language Institute.
- (L) United States Coast Guard Academy.
- (M) National Intelligence University.
- (N) United States Merchant Marine Academy.

(3) COVERED WORK.—The term “covered work” means a literary work produced by a covered author in the course of employment at a covered institution for publication by a scholarly press or journal.

(Pub. L. 94-553, title I, § 101, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2546; Pub. L. 116-92, div. A, title V, § 544, Dec. 20, 2019, 133 Stat. 1376; Pub. L. 117-263, div. C, title XXXV, § 3514, div. F, title LXIII, § 6306, Dec. 23, 2022, 136 Stat. 3068, 3504; Pub. L. 118-159, div. F, title LXIX, § 6902(e), Dec. 23, 2024, 138 Stat. 2518.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

HOUSE REPORT NO. 94-1476

Scope of the Prohibition. The basic premise of section 105 of the bill is the same as that of section 8 of the present law [section 8 of former title 17]—that works produced for the U.S. Government by its officers and employees should not be subject to copyright. The provision applies the principle equally to unpublished and published works.

The general prohibition against copyright in section 105 applies to “any work of the United States Government,” which is defined in section 101 as “a work prepared by an officer or employee of the United States Government as part of that person’s official duties.” Under this definition a Government official or employee would not be prevented from securing copyright in a work written at that person’s own volition and outside his or her duties, even though the subject matter involves the Government work or professional field of the official or employee. Although the wording of the definition of “work of the United States Government” differs somewhat from that of the definition of “work made for hire,” the concepts are intended to be construed in the same way.

A more difficult and far-reaching problem is whether the definition should be broadened to prohibit copyright in works prepared under U.S. Government contract or grant. As the bill is written, the Government agency concerned could determine in each case whether to allow an independent contractor or grantee, to secure copyright in works prepared in whole or in part with the use of Government funds. The argument that has been made against allowing copyright in this situation is that the public should not be required to pay a “double subsidy,” and that it is inconsistent to prohibit copyright in works by Government employees while permitting private copyrights in a growing body of works created by persons who are paid with Government funds. Those arguing in favor of potential copyright protection have stressed the importance of copyright as an incentive to creation and dissemination in this situation, and the basically different policy considerations, applicable to works written by Government employees and those applicable to works prepared by private organizations with the use of Federal funds.

The bill deliberately avoids making any sort of outright, unqualified prohibition against copyright in works prepared under Government contract or grant. There may well be cases where it would be in the public interest to deny copyright in the writings generated by Government research contracts and the like; it can be assumed that, where a Government agency commissions a work for its own use merely as an alternative to having one of its own employees prepare the work, the right to secure a private copyright would be withheld. However, there are almost certainly many other cases where the denial of copyright protection would be unfair or would hamper the production and publication of important works. Where, under the particular circumstances, Congress or the agency involved finds that the need to have a work freely available outweighs the need of the private author to secure copyright, the problem can be dealt with by specific legislation, agency regulations, or contractual restrictions.

The prohibition on copyright protection for United States Government works is not intended to have any effect on protection of these works abroad. Works of the governments of most other countries are copyrighted. There are no valid policy reasons for denying such protection to United States Government works in foreign countries, or for precluding the Government from making licenses for the use of its works abroad.

The effect of section 105 is intended to place all works of the United States Government, published or unpublished, in the public domain. This means that the individual Government official or employee who wrote the work could not secure copyright in it or restrain its dissemination by the Government or anyone else, but it also means that, as far as the copyright law is con-

cerned, the Government could not restrain the employee or official from disseminating the work if he or she chooses to do so. The use of the term "work of the United States Government" does not mean that a work falling within the definition of that term is the property of the U.S. Government.

LIMITED EXCEPTION FOR NATIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE

At the House hearings in 1975 the U.S. Department of Commerce called attention to its National Technical Information Service (NTIS), which has a statutory mandate, under Chapter 23 [§1151 et seq.] of Title 15 of the U.S. Code, to operate a clearinghouse for the collection and dissemination of scientific, technical and engineering information. Under its statute, NTIS is required to be as self-sustaining as possible, and not to force the general public to bear publishing costs that are for private benefit. The Department urged an amendment to section 105 that would allow it to secure copyright in NTIS publications both in the United States and abroad, noting that a precedent exists in the Standard Reference Data Act (15 U.S.C. §290(e) [§290e]).

In response to this request the Committee adopted a limited exception to the general prohibition in section 105, permitting the Secretary of Commerce to "secure copyright for a limited term not to exceed five years, on behalf of the United States as author or copyright owner" in any NTIS publication disseminated pursuant to 15 U.S.C. Chapter 23 [§1151 et seq.]. In order to "secure copyright" in a work under this amendment the Secretary would be required to publish the work with a copyright notice, and the five-year term would begin upon the date of first publication.

Proposed Saving Clause. Section 8 of the statute now in effect [section 8 of former title 17] includes a saving clause intended to make clear that the copyright protection of a private work is not affected if the work is published by the Government. This provision serves a real purpose in the present law because of the ambiguity of the undefined term "any publication of the United States Government." Section 105 of the bill, however, uses the operative term "work of the United States Government" and defines it in such a way that privately written works are clearly excluded from the prohibition; accordingly, a saving clause becomes superfluous.

Retention of a saving clause has been urged on the ground that the present statutory provision is frequently cited, and that having the provision expressly stated in the law would avoid questions and explanations. The committee here observes: (1) there is nothing in section 105 that would relieve the Government of its obligation to secure permission in order to publish a copyrighted work; and (2) publication or other use by the Government of a private work would not affect its copyright protection in any way. The question of use of copyrighted material in documents published by the Congress and its Committees is discussed below in connection with section 107.

Works of the United States Postal Service. The intent of section 105 [this section] is to restrict the prohibition against Government copyright to works written by employees of the United States Government within the scope of their official duties. In accordance with the objectives of the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 [Pub. L. 91-375, which enacted title 39, Postal Service], this section does not apply to works created by employees of the United States Postal Service. In addition to enforcing the criminal statutes proscribing the forgery or counterfeiting of postage stamps, the Postal Service could, if it chooses, use the copyright law to prevent the reproduction of postage stamp designs for private or commercial non-postal services (for example, in philatelic publications and catalogs, in general advertising, in art reproductions, in textile designs, and so forth). However, any copyright claimed by the Postal Service in its works, including postage stamp designs, would be subject to the same conditions, formalities, and time limits as other copyrightable works.

Editorial Notes

AMENDMENTS

2024—Pub. L. 118-159 amended section generally. Prior to amendment, section related to copyright protection for United States Government works.

2022—Subsec. (b). Pub. L. 117-263, §3514(1), substituted "Certain Works" for "Certain of Works" in heading.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 117-263, §6306(2), added subsec. (c) and struck out former subsec. (c). Text read as follows: "A covered Secretary may direct the covered author of a covered work to provide the Federal Government with an irrevocable, royalty-free, world-wide, nonexclusive license to reproduce, distribute, perform, or display such covered work for purposes of the United States Government."

Pub. L. 117-263, §3514(2), substituted "A covered Secretary" for "The Secretary of Defense".

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 117-263, §§3514(3), 6306(1), made identical amendments, redesignating subsec. (c) relating to definitions as (d).

Subsec. (d)(2)(M). Pub. L. 117-263, §6306(3), added subpar. (M) relating to National Intelligence University.

Pub. L. 117-263, §3514(4)(A), added subpar. (M) relating to United States Merchant Marine Academy.

Subsec. (d)(3), (4). Pub. L. 117-263, §3514(4)(B), (C), added par. (3) and redesignated former par. (3) as (4).

2019—Pub. L. 116-92 designated existing provisions as subsec. (a), inserted heading, and added subsec. (b) and two subsecs. (c). Heading of subsec. (a) was conformed to the style used in this title.

Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

COORDINATION WITH OTHER AMENDMENTS MADE BY DIVISION F OF PUB. L. 118-159

Pub. L. 118-159, div. F, title LXIX, §6902(f), Dec. 23, 2024, 138 Stat. 2519, provided that: "For purposes of applying amendments made by provisions of this division [div. F of Pub. L. 118-159, see Tables for classification] other than this section, the amendments made by this section [amending this section and sections 3024, 3033, 3232a, 3234, 3244, 3304, and 3614 of Title 50, War and National Defense] shall be treated as having been enacted immediately before any such amendments by other provisions of this division."

§ 106. Exclusive rights in copyrighted works

Subject to sections 107 through 122, the owner of copyright under this title has the exclusive rights to do and to authorize any of the following:

(1) to reproduce the copyrighted work in copies or phonorecords;

(2) to prepare derivative works based upon the copyrighted work;

(3) to distribute copies or phonorecords of the copyrighted work to the public by sale or other transfer of ownership, or by rental, lease, or lending;

(4) in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and motion pictures and other audiovisual works, to perform the copyrighted work publicly;

(5) in the case of literary, musical, dramatic, and choreographic works, pantomimes, and pictorial, graphic, or sculptural works, including the individual images of a motion picture or other audiovisual work, to display the copyrighted work publicly; and

(6) in the case of sound recordings, to perform the copyrighted work publicly by means of a digital audio transmission.

(Pub. L. 94-553, title I, §101, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2546; Pub. L. 101-318, §3(d), July 3, 1990, 104 Stat.