



Visual Artists Copyright Reform Act (VACRA) of 2025

Introduced By: Senators Peter Welch (D-Vt.); Marsha Blackburn (R-Tenn.)

Background: Under the *Copyright Act of 1976*, copyright protection applies to an original work as soon as it is created and “fixed in a tangible form.” While registering a claim to copyright is not required, the *Copyright Act* highly incentivizes registration of copyright-protected works. For photographers, registration of copyrighted works has become an arduous, outdated, and expensive process for photographers, illustrators, graphic artists, and other visual creators.

The Copyright Office currently allows for “group registration,” in which creators can register multiple works in a single application for one cost. The Office limits photographers to 750 images in any group registration at a cost of \$55 per registration. However, because photographers routinely create thousands of images in a single day, they simply cannot afford the time and expense of registering their work at high volumes under the 750-image limit. Additionally, graphic artists and illustrators are limited to only 10 works in a group registration of unpublished works, and they may not group register their published works.

Legislation: The *Visual Artists Copyright Reform Act (VACRA) of 2025* would ensure that all visual artists are full and effective participants in our copyright system by making it easier and less costly for high-volume visual artists to register their works. VACRA provides narrowly tailored, commonsense reforms to copyright law and the Copyright Office to foster a more complete public registry of works. Specifically, the bill would:

1. ***Establish Group Registration Options That Match How Visual Creators Work:*** This bill directs the Register of Copyrights to establish a process for an individual to submit a single application for copyright registration of a group of photographs. A single application is limited to 3,000 or fewer photographs, but the Register may allow applications of greater than 3,000 as technology advances.
2. ***Adopt a Deferred Registration Option:*** Under current law, the Copyright Office calculates registration fees based on their administrative costs—regardless of ability to pay or the punitive impact of high fees on creators. These high fees ultimately result in many high-volume visual artists not registering their works due to high cost. It also creates a “deferred examination” option for high volume creators like and makes clear that the fee for a deferred registration application is one-half of the standard application fee for copyright registration.
3. ***Allow for Subscription Fees:*** This bill also directs the Register of Copyrights to establish regulations that allow for registration subscriptions for pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works, as well as for waiving fees for subscribers. This would allow visual artists to purchase a yearly or periodic subscription under which they can efficiently upload and register works produced *before* they are sent to potential clients.
4. ***Third Party Registries of Photos:*** VACRA also directs the Register of Copyrights to create a secure, searchable registry of electronic copies of copyrighted photos and the copyright holders’ information. Depositing a photo in this registry would satisfy all necessary copyright deposit requirements and allow creators to submit deposits to third-party registries rather than the Copyright Office. It would also streamline the process and provide the public with useful information about the deposited work.

Supporting Organizations: The VACRA is endorsed by the American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP) and the Professional Photographers of America.