

2005—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 109-9 inserted “preregistration or” after “shall be instituted until”.

1998—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 105-304, in first sentence, struck out “actions for infringement of copyright in Berne Convention works whose country of origin is not the United States and” after “Except for” and inserted “United States” after “copyright in any”.

1997—Subsec. (b)(1). Pub. L. 105-80 amended par. (1) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (1) read as follows: “serves notice upon the infringer, not less than ten or more than thirty days before such fixation, identifying the work and the specific time and source of its first transmission, and declaring an intention to secure copyright in the work; and”.

1990—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 101-650 inserted “and an action brought for a violation of the rights of the author under section 106A(a)” after “United States”.

1988—Pub. L. 100-568, §9(b)(1)(A), substituted “Registration and infringement actions” for “Registration as prerequisite to infringement suit” in section catchline.

Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 100-568, §9(b)(1)(B), substituted “Except for actions for infringement of copyright in Berne Convention works whose country of origin is not the United States, and subject” for “Subject”.

Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 100-568, §9(b)(1)(C), substituted “work, if required by subsection (a),” for “work”.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1990 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 101-650 effective 6 months after Dec. 1, 1990, see section 610 of Pub. L. 101-650, set out as an Effective Date note under section 106A of this title.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1988 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 100-568 effective Mar. 1, 1989, with any cause of action arising under this title before such date being governed by provisions in effect when cause of action arose, see section 13 of Pub. L. 100-568, set out as a note under section 101 of this title.

§ 412. Registration as prerequisite to certain remedies for infringement

In any action under this title, other than an action brought for a violation of the rights of the author under section 106A(a), an action for infringement of the copyright of a work that has been preregistered under section 408(f) before the commencement of the infringement and that has an effective date of registration not later than the earlier of 3 months after the first publication of the work or 1 month after the copyright owner has learned of the infringement, or an action instituted under section 411(c), no award of statutory damages or of attorney’s fees, as provided by sections 504 and 505, shall be made for—

- (1) any infringement of copyright in an unpublished work commenced before the effective date of its registration; or
- (2) any infringement of copyright commenced after first publication of the work and before the effective date of its registration, unless such registration is made within three months after the first publication of the work.

(Pub. L. 94-553, title I, §101, Oct. 19, 1976, 90 Stat. 2583; Pub. L. 101-650, title VI, §606(c)(2), Dec. 1, 1990, 104 Stat. 5131; Pub. L. 109-9, title I, §104(c), Apr. 27, 2005, 119 Stat. 222; Pub. L. 110-403, title I, §101(b)(1), Oct. 13, 2008, 122 Stat. 4258.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

HOUSE REPORT NO. 94-1476

The need for section 412 arises from two basic changes the bill will make in the present law.

(1) Copyright registration for published works, which is useful and important to users and the public at large, would no longer be compulsory, and should therefore be induced in some practical way.

(2) The great body of unpublished works now protected at common law would automatically be brought under copyright and given statutory protection. The remedies for infringement presently available at common law should continue to apply to these works under the statute, but they should not be given special statutory remedies unless the owner has, by registration, made a public record of his copyright claim.

Under the general scheme of the bill, a copyright owner whose work has been infringed before registration would be entitled to the remedies ordinarily available in infringement cases: an injunction on terms the court considers fair, and his actual damages plus any applicable profits not used as a measure of damages. However, section 412 would deny any award of the special or “extraordinary” remedies of statutory damages or attorney’s fees where infringement of copyright in an unpublished work began before registration or where, in the case of a published work, infringement commenced after publication and before registration (unless registration has been made within a grace period of three months after publication). These provisions would be applicable to works of foreign and domestic origin alike.

In providing that statutory damages and attorney’s fees are not recoverable for infringement of unpublished, unregistered works, clause (1) of section 412 in no way narrows the remedies available under the present law. With respect to published works, clause (2) would generally deny an award of those two special remedies where infringement takes place before registration. As an exception, however, the clause provides a grace period of three months after publication during which registration can be made without loss of remedies; full remedies could be recovered for any infringement begun during the three months after publication if registration is made before that period has ended. This exception is needed to take care of newsworthy or suddenly popular works which may be infringed almost as soon as they are published, before the copyright owner has had a reasonable opportunity to register his claim.

AMENDMENTS

2008—Pub. L. 110-403 substituted “section 411(c)” for “section 411(b)” in introductory provisions.

2005—Pub. L. 109-9 inserted “, an action for infringement of the copyright of a work that has been preregistered under section 408(f) before the commencement of the infringement and that has an effective date of registration not later than the earlier of 3 months after the first publication of the work or 1 month after the copyright owner has learned of the infringement,” after “section 106A(a)” in introductory provisions.

1990—Pub. L. 101-650 inserted “an action brought for a violation of the rights of the author under section 106A(a) or” after “other than” in introductory provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1990 AMENDMENT

Amendment by Pub. L. 101-650 effective 6 months after Dec. 1, 1990, see section 610 of Pub. L. 101-650, set out as an Effective Date note under section 106A of this title.

CHAPTER 5—COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT AND REMEDIES

Sec.	
501.	Infringement of copyright.
502.	Remedies for infringement: Injunctions.
503.	Remedies for infringement: Impounding and disposition of infringing articles.
504.	Remedies for infringement: Damages and profits.