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NEWS

DISNEY LOBBYING FOR COPYRIGHT EXTENSION NO MICKEY MOUSE EFFORT CONGRESS OKS BILL GRANTING CREATORS 20 MORE YEARS

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Facing the loss of their exclusive rights to Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and other cartoon stars, Walt **Disney** Co. executives led a successful lobbying campaign to secure an extra 20 years of protection for their U.S. copyrights.

Congress passed the legislation, now awaiting President Clinton's signature, to extend the copyrights that otherwise would have expired beginning in 2003.

Disney Chairman Michael Eisner took his concerns directly to Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.). The company's political action committee also contributed to key lawmakers.

"We strongly indicated our support for the measure," said Ken Green, a spokesman for **Disney**, whose **copyright** on Mickey Mouse was scheduled to expire in 2003, on Pluto in 2005, on Goofy in 2007 and on Donald Duck in 2009.

Richard Taylor, a Motion Picture Association of America spokesman, said **Disney** worked very hard on the issue. MPAA also used its heavyweight lobbyist--President Jack Valenti, who called on his decades-old contacts with legislators.

The change in the law allows corporations to have exclusive rights for a total of 95 years, instead of 75 years. For individuals, such as authors and songwriters, it extends copyrights to a total of 70 years after death, up from 50 years.

Rep. Howard Coble (R-N.C.), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee's courts and intellectual property subcommittee, said the extensions give American inventors and creators the same **copyright** protection as those in Europe.

The battle for **copyright** protection pitted well-known corporations such as **Disney** and Time Warner against librarians and consumer organizations. The American Libraries Association, for example, urged its 54,000 individual members to call their local lawmakers and urged them to reject the change.

"You have to have some sort of incentive for people to write books and create films, but it's not supposed to go on forever," said Jamie Love, director of the Consumer Product on Technology, a group affiliated with consumer advocate Ralph Nader. "It's supposed to enter the public domain and everyone is supposed to have access to it."

In addition to its face-to-face lobbying campaign, **Disney** made campaign contributions. Of the 13 initial sponsors of the House bill, 10 received contributions from **Disney**'s political action committee. The largest donations, \$5,000 each, went to Coble and Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.), a senior member of the Judiciary Committee.

On the Senate side, eight of the 12 sponsors received **Disney** contributions. Judiciary Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), the bill's chief sponsor, received \$6,000, second only to Democratic Sen. Barbara Boxer, who

represents **Disney**'s home state of California and who is up for re-election this fall. **Disney** gave \$1,000 to Lott on June 16, the day he signed up as a bill co-sponsor and a week after Lott met with Eisner.

Libraries and consumer groups did win some concessions. During the final 20 years of **copyright** protection, libraries, schools and archives were given broader use of **copyright** materials without having to get the permission of the **copyright** owner.

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Region	All Regions
Language	English
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