Dear Representative:

Since the founding of our country, the Constitution has defended the freedom of all Americans to read, listen to, and share books, magazines, and other copyrighted materials. That all changed, however, when Congress enacted the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998. By rewriting well-established law, Congress--no doubt inadvertently--gave giant entertainment and media companies the legal tools to restrict private and public use of books, music, and movies in digital form.

Even though our laws had always protected the personal use of creative works in analog form, the DMCA gave giant media companies the power to frustrate the ability of ordinary, law-abiding citizens to make personal use of the digital products they had purchased, for scientists to engage in legitimate research, and for entrepreneurs to develop new technology or to improve upon existing products.

Fortunately, Representatives Rick Boucher and John Doolittle have introduced H.R. 107, which would give all Americans the same “fair use” rights they had enjoyed for a century and a half. The bill, for example, would give consumers the power to “unlock” technology restricting their ability to use the media they already own, as long as they were engaged in otherwise lawful conduct, such as finding a way to skip promos at the beginning of a DVD. The bill would ensure that scientists could not be sued when engaged in legitimate scientific research, such as for homeland security purposes. The bill would give consumers and entrepreneurs alike the freedom to use technology for well-established fair use purposes. Finally, the bill would require record companies to label so-called “copy protected” CDs so that consumers would know at the store, before getting home, that they couldn’t make a copy even for personal use.

How would H.R. 107 affect ordinary, traditionally lawful activities? When H.R. 107 has been enacted, it will no longer be a crime under the DMCA . . .

- for a mother to use “anti-circumvention” technology to skip past promotions for other movies at the beginning of a DVD, especially promotions she deems inappropriate for her young children or after she herself has been forced to see the promotions over and over;
- for a child to make a one-minute digital excerpt from a copy-protected electronic encyclopedia to include in a multimedia project for a school music class; and
- for a professor of computer science to work with his class to test scrambling technology meant to block terrorists from accessing sensitive first-responder communications.

We urge you to support this vitally important legislation. Defend consumers’ use of educational, cultural, and other material, not the interests of the media giants. Please cosponsor H.R. 107 today.