

Short Comment Regarding a Proposed Exemption Under 17 U.S.C. 1201

Item 1. Commenter Information

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This comment is filed by the Free Software Foundation, a charitable corporation founded in 1985. The Foundation is the largest single contributor to the GNU operating system (used widely today in its GNU/Linux variant). The Foundation's GNU General Public License is the most widely used free software license, covering major components of the GNU operating system and tens of thousands of other computer programs used on hundreds of millions of computers around the world.

Item 2. Proposed Class Addressed

Proposed Class 26: Software—3D Printers

Item 3. Statement Regarding Proposed Exemption

The GNU/Linux operating system has become one of the most widely used operating systems on the planet. The GNU System and the kernel Linux are called free software, because users are free to study, share and improve the software. Those who promote free software believe that controlling ones own computing should be a universal right.

Digital restrictions interfere with the ability to enjoy these freedoms. Circumventing such restrictions for any non-infringing use should not come with the threat of legal sanction. The process of continually applying for exemptions under 17 U.S.C. 1201 is onerous and instead any circumvention for a non-infringing purpose should be permitted.

However, where exemptions are used to safeguard the public from these laws, it must be the case that exemptions should cover the sharing and distribution of software and instructions for circumventing access controls technologies. Without this, exemptions are near useless, since it would require everyone who wants to act within their scope to write their own software to do so.

3D printing technology makes use of additive processes in which successive layers of material are laid down under computer control. 3D printers are able to handle a wide variety of materials. Popular consumer 3D printers often use plastics. However, scientists and researchers also make use of 3D printers to do "bioprinting," which make print layers of cell patterns to form a 3D printed construct in which the cell function and viability remain preserved. Access control mechanisms should not be used to restrict how a person makes use of such machinery or what materials can be fed into them. If such access controls are used in such technology, circumvention of such access controls is essential for a user to be able to make use of and control ones machine.