



July 11, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing in regards to your essay on the current status of health care reform that appeared today in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. As a research scientist it is thrilling to see such a thoughtful and informative penned by a sitting president appearing in a scholarly journal. As a longtime advocate for improved public access to the research literature, I was also happy to see that, unlike most articles in *JAMA*, yours was not placed behind the journal's paywall.

However, I would like to bring to your attention an issue that you, as both a constitutional lawyer and President sworn to uphold the laws of the United States, will, I hope, find of interest. As you are undoubtedly aware, US copyright law (specifically section 105) states that copyright protection is not available to works of the federal government. I believe that we can safely assume that a work penned by you as part of your official duties as President is subject to this provision. Nonetheless, the official electronic copy of your article (attached) bears the statement "**Copyright 2016 American Medical Association. All rights reserved**" on every page in clear violation of copyright law.

I would like to humbly request that you demand on behalf of citizens of the United States that *JAMA* remove this illegal copyright claim from your paper. Furthermore, I hope that you can use the opportunity afforded by this incident to shed light the broader issue of scientific journals illegally claiming copyright in thousands of other works of the US government every year, thereby restricting access to and use of these works which by law belong in the public domain.

Your administration has made great strides towards increasing access to the results of federally funded scientific research through executive action on public access policies. **You are now in a unique position, both as President and a published author, to demand an end to an odious practice that infringes on the right of US citizens to access work of their government.**

Sincerely yours,

Michael B. Eisen, Ph.D.  
Professor of Molecular and Cell Biology  
Investigator, Howard Hughes Medical Institute  
University of California, Berkeley