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Derivative Works
draft-sayre-gendispatch-derivative-01

Abstract

This document clarifies that IETF correspondence must not contain legal limitations on derivative works.

About This Document

This note is to be removed before publishing as an RFC.

Status information for this document may be found at
<https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/draft-sayre-gendispatch-derivative/>.

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1. Introduction

This document updates Rights Contributors Provide to the IETF Trust [RFC5378] in order to clarify and limit which contributions may include a restriction on derivative rights.

2. Conventions and Definitions

The key words "MUST", "MUST NOT", "REQUIRED", "SHALL", "SHALL NOT", "SHOULD", "SHOULD NOT", "RECOMMENDED", "NOT RECOMMENDED", "MAY", and "OPTIONAL" in this document are to be interpreted as described in BCP 14 [RFC2119] [RFC8174] when, and only when, they appear in all capitals, as shown here.

3. Derivative Works

There is an expansive definition of "Contribution" in [RFC5378]. There is also a mechanism formally defined in Section 5.3 of that RFC that allows a Contributor to limit the right to produce derivative works. As written, this optional mechanism applies to all Contributions. Using this mechanism outside of specifications, for example, in electronic mail, makes it difficult for people to respond

and inhibits collaboration. This behavior impedes the very idea of collaborating about the Internet over the Internet. The IESG has stated [IESG-DERIV] that derivative works limitations should only be applied to technical specifications.

This document narrows the use of this mechanism to technical specifications, such as Internet-Drafts or other complete specifications. It no longer applies to correspondence, such as public online IETF fora as defined in [RFC9945], appeals, minutes, or audio or video recordings of IETF meetings.

Such IETF correspondence MUST NOT include restrictions on derivative works. This restriction covers text that is intentionally inserted and also includes automatically inserted terms inserted by corporate email software. Both variations are disruptive.

It is always possible to publish an Internet-Draft with a restrictive derivative works clause.

When introducing a document with such a clause, care must be taken to note the restriction. This consideration applies to email and IETF meeting presentations.

All other rights Contributors provide to the IETF Trust [RFC5378] remain in place.

4. Security Considerations

This document has no direct impact on Internet security.

5. IANA Considerations

This document has no IANA actions.

6. References

6.1. Normative References

- [RFC2119] Bradner, S., "Key words for use in RFCs to Indicate Requirement Levels", BCP 14, RFC 2119, DOI 10.17487/RFC2119, March 1997, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc2119>>.
- [RFC5378] Bradner, S., Ed. and J. Contreras, Ed., "Rights Contributors Provide to the IETF Trust", BCP 78, RFC 5378, DOI 10.17487/RFC5378, November 2008, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc5378>>.

- [RFC8174] Leiba, B., "Ambiguity of Uppercase vs Lowercase in RFC 2119 Key Words", BCP 14, RFC 8174, DOI 10.17487/RFC8174, May 2017, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc8174>>.
- [RFC9945] Eggert, L., Ed. and E. Lear, Ed., "IETF Community Moderation", BCP 245, RFC 9945, DOI 10.17487/RFC9945, February 2026, <<https://www.rfc-editor.org/rfc/rfc9945>>.

6.2. Informative References

- [IESG-DERIV] IESG, "IESG Statement on Clarifying Derivative Works Rights", October 2025, <<https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/statement-iesg-statement-on-clarifying-derivative-works-rights/>>.

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