

February 6, 2012

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Congress:

We the undersigned groups align ourselves with the more than 14 million Americans who joined us in opposition to the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA). Together we participated in the largest online protest in American history (currently estimated at more than 115,000 websites) because we believe these bills would have been harmful to free speech, innovation, cyber security, and job creation. We want to thank the Members of Congress who shared our concerns and opposed these bills.

Now is the time for Congress to take a breath, step back, and approach the issues from a fresh perspective. A wide variety of important concerns have been expressed – including views from technologists, law professors, international human rights groups, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, and above all, individual Internet users. The concerns are too fundamental and too numerous to be fully addressed through hasty revisions to these bills. Nor can they be addressed by closed door negotiations among a small set of inside the-beltway stakeholders.

Furthermore, Congress must determine the true extent of online infringement and, as importantly, the economic effects of that activity, from accurate and unbiased sources, and weigh them against the economic and social costs of new copyright legislation. Congress cannot simply accept industry estimates regarding economic and job implications of infringement given the Government Accountability Office's clear finding in 2010 that previous statistics and quantitative studies on the subject have been unreliable.

Finally, any future debates concerning intellectual property law in regards to the Internet must avoid taking a narrow, single-industry perspective. Too often, Congress has focused exclusively on areas where some rights holders believe existing law is too weak, without also considering the ways in which existing policies have undermined free speech and innovation. Some examples include the year-long government seizure of a lawful music blog (dajaz1.com) and the shutdown by private litigation of a lawful startup video platform (veoh.com).

The Internet's value to the public makes it necessary that any legislative debate in this area be open, transparent, and sufficiently deliberative to allow the full range of interested parties to offer input and to evaluate specific proposals. To avoid doing so would be to repeat the mistakes of SOPA and PIPA.

Sincerely,

106 Miles
Access
Access Humboldt
American Library Association
Amicus
Amnesty International (USA)
Art Is Change
Asana
Association of College and Research
Libraries
Automatic
Canvas Networks
Center for Democracy & Technology
Center for Media Justice
Center for Rural Strategies
Cheezburger Network
ColorofChange.org
Consumers Union
Demand Progress
Democracy for America
Don't Censor the Net
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Engine Advocacy
Entertainment Consumers Association
F2C: Freedom to Connect
Fight for the Future
Foundry Group
Free Press Action Fund
Free Speech TV
Hackers & Founders
Hattery
Human Rights Defense Center
Human Rights Watch
InSparq
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Internet Archive
Learning About Multimedia Project
Main Street Project
Mayfirst/People Link
Media Alliance
Media Literacy Project
Media Mobilizing Project
Mom's Rising
Mountain Area Information Network
Mozilla

NAMAC
Native Public Media
New America Foundation's Open
Technology Initiative
New Media Rights
NY Tech Meetup
OATV
OpenCongress.org
OpenGovernment.org
O'Reilly Media
Participatory Politics Foundation
PCUN Oregon Farmworkers Union
People's Production House
Presente.org
Public Knowledge
reddit inc.
Reel Grrls
Save Hosting Coalition
SF New Tech
Startup Weekend
SV Angel
Teethie, Inc
Thousand Kites
Tu cows Inc.
Twitpic Inc.
Women In Media & News
Women Who Tech
Women, Action & the Media
Women's Media Center
WordPress Foundation