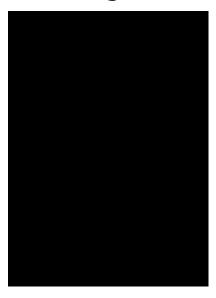# SOPA, PIPA Blackouts Are Working

The bills are the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect Intellectual Property Act (PIPA).

According to Wikipedia, the proposed legislation would put "the burden on website owners to police user-contributed material and call for the unnecessary blocking of entire sites. Small sites won't have sufficient resources to defend themselves. Big media companies may seek to cut off funding sources for their foreign competitors even if copyright isn't being infringed. Foreign sites will be blacklisted which means they won't show up in major search engines. And SOPA and PIPA build a framework for future restrictions and suppression."

Ostensibly to reduce piracy, the bills overreach greatly. A single perceived violation, for instance, could get an entire website shut down or starved to death through forced cessation of payment processing or delivery of advertising to the website. How this might work if the bills become law is expalained by the Electronic Frontier Foundation:

> Etsy [an online marketplace for handmade goods] has over 800,000 active "shops"... — far too many for Etsy to monitor manually. Further, because of the eclectic nature of goods listed, it's difficult to technically filter through the objects listed.

> All that means that it's not feasible for Etsy to proactively prevent listings that may be perceived to violate US copyright or trademark law. That's a problem, because under SOPA, anybody who is a "holder of an intellectual property right harmed by the activities" of even a portion of the site, could serve Etsy's payment processors with a notice that would require them to suspend Etsy's service within 5 days. That means that a trademark violation in one of the storefronts could lead to payment suspension across the entire site.

> If a site like Etsy is forced to proactively review every single item its sellers put up for sale, then Etsy no longer has a business model that will work. And the same would be true for Facebook, or YouTube, or any other site that incorporates user-generated activity as part of its business plan. Suddenly, we're back to the old model, with that familiar centralization of authority and control and disenfranchisement of the masses.

This is just silly, according to supporters. Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas), the chief sponsor of SOPA, called Wikipedia's blackout "a publicity stunt." And Chris Dodd, the liberal former Senator from Connecticut who is now the head of the Motion Picture Association of America, wrote in a press release:

> Some technology business interests are resorting to stunts that punish their users or turn them into their corporate pawns....

> It is an irresponsible response and a disservice to people who rely on them for information and

use their services. It is also an abuse of power given the freedoms these companies enjoy in the marketplace today. It's a dangerous and troubling development when the platforms that serve as gateways to information intentionally skew the facts to incite their users in order to further their corporate interests.

A so-called "blackout" is yet another gimmick, albeit a dangerous one, designed to punish elected and administration officials who are working diligently to protect American jobs from foreign criminals.

Stunt or not, the blackout is beginning to have its intended effect on lawmakers. Fox News reported that Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) said the bill "would not move to the House floor for a vote unless a consensus is reached." Erick Erickson was relieved to learn that Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) had changed his mind about supporting the Senate bill. Erickson, head of RedState.com, was irate about Rubio's support of the bill and threatened to promote a primary contest in Rubio's district over the matter. Said Erickson:

This morning I noted that we should "primary" Senators and Representatives on the left and right who refuse to back away from SOPA and Protect IP.

Included in the list of sponsors, unfortunately, was Senator Marco Rubio. I would hate, hate, haaaaaate to "primary" such a great guy. We spent a lot of time, energy, effort and money getting him elected. But SOPA and Protect IP [are] that bad...

About an hour ago, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida showed again why he is a real leader *and* listener within the conservative movement. He is dropping his co-sponsorship of Protect IP.

Here is part of Rubio's announcement of his change of heart and sponsorship:

Earlier this year, this bill passed the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously and without controversy. Since then, we've heard legitimate concerns about the impact the bill could have on access to the Internet and about a potentially unreasonable expansion of the federal government's power to impact the Internet. Congress should listen and avoid rushing through a bill that could have many unintended consequences.

Even the White House is backing away from the bills, according to The White House Blog:

While we believe that online piracy by foreign websites is a serious problem that requires a serious legislative response, we will not support legislation that reduces freedom of expression, increases cyber security risk or undermines the dynamic, innovative global internet.

Dr. Gary North thinks the President is serious but not from any fundamental belief in essential freedom of expression by the American people. Instead, the President's change of heart has everything to do with politics. The threat to SOPA and PIPA gave him a chance to "curry favor" with the protesters, whose numbers are legion. Wrote North: "He saw that this was a way to take a stand that would cost him nothing and gain support with a huge constituency."

It's not the principled statesmen that the blackout is designed to influence, it's the fence-sitters and go-along-to-get-along types. It even works on company owners who wind up on the wrong side of their customers. The new CEO of web hosting service Go Daddy, Warren Adelman [no relation to the writer] offended them by announcing his support for SOPA on December 22. Within five days the company lost 72,000 domain names and was forced to retract the president's statement.

The power of the Internet continues to grow. Even Tim Wu, a professor at the liberal Columbia Law

School, was forced to admit: "This is the first real test of the political strength of the Web and, regardless of how things go, they are no longer a pushover. The Web taking a stand against one of the most powerful lobbyers and seeming to get somewhere is definitely a first."

Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia and creator of the "blackout," put it well:

> One of the things we have learned … is that the internet is a powerfully effective tool for the public to organize and have their voices heard.

Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative,
non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.

What's Included?

24 Issues Per Year
Optional Print Edition
Digital Edition Access
Exclusive Subscriber Content
Audio provided for all articles
Unlimited access to past issues
Coming Soon! Ad FREE
60-Day money back guarantee!
Cancel anytime.

Subscribe