

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 18, 2012

Innovators, Speakers, Thinkers, and Agents for Change
The World Wide Web

Dear Friends:

Today thousands of websites have chosen to voluntarily go offline or modify their home pages with public service information. Some have called this a stunt. I say it's a brave and poignant reminder that we can't take the Internet for granted.

The Internet has become an integral part of everyday life precisely because it has been an open-to-all land of opportunity where entrepreneurs, thinkers and innovators are free to try, fail and then try again. The Internet has changed the way we communicate with each other, the way we learn about the world and the way we conduct business. It has done this by eliminating the tollgates, middle men, and other barriers to entry that have so often predetermined winners and losers in the marketplace. It has created a world where ideas, products and creative expression have an opportunity regardless of who offers them or where they originate.

Protect IP (PIPA) and the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) are a step towards a different kind of Internet. They are a step towards an Internet in which those with money and lawyers and access to power have a greater voice than those who don't. They are a step towards an Internet in which online innovators need lawyers as much or more than they need good ideas. And they are a step towards a world in which Americans have less of a voice to argue for a free and open Internet around the world.

Proponents of these bills say these arguments are overblown, but I say any step towards an Internet in which one person's voice counts more than another is a step in the wrong direction. These are bills that should give us pause. These are bills that should be studied and debated. Congress should consult experts and consider alternatives and make 100% sure that any step it takes to police the Internet doesn't change the Internet as we know it. This is why I put a hold on the Protect IP Act and its predecessor over a year ago and introduced a bipartisan alternative last month.

The Senate, however, has scheduled a vote for Tuesday, January 24 at 2:15 PM to override my hold and move the Protect IP Act towards passage. **This will be the deciding vote** that determines whether PIPA and SOPA move through the Congress or are turned back for more sober discussion.

We are up against a group of the biggest, most powerful, well-funded and well-organized interest groups in Washington. No one thought millions of Internet users would speak up or that those voices could overcome the power of these interests. Today you showed that the Internet is not just a platform for ideas, commerce, and expression, but also for political action that will defend those principles. **Your voices must continue to be heard.**

Thank you for standing up for what's important, for continuing to speak out and for demonstrating that we should always stand up for what we think is right regardless of the odds. This is an opportunity to reshape the way Washington operates, not just responding to narrow interests but hearing the voices of millions of Americans whose rights and livelihoods are affected by our actions.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator