

France approves Internet piracy bill

September 15 2009, By SYLVIE CORBET , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- France's lower house of parliament has approved a pioneering bill allowing authorities to cut off Internet access to people who download illegally.

The bill has garnered attention beyond France, both from music and film industries struggling to keep up official revenue and from privacy advocates who say it threatens civil liberties.

The measure passed Tuesday in the National Assembly following approval by the Senate in July. It must clear another hurdle to become law, gaining approval from a small committee from both houses of parliament.

Under the bill, pirates who ignore e-mail warnings and a registered letter could see their Internet connections cut for up to a year. They could also face up to euro300,000 (\$435,000) in fines or jail time.

THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. Check back soon for further information. AP's earlier story is below.

PARIS (AP) - French legislators vote Tuesday on a pioneering bill allowing authorities to cut off Internet access to people who download illegally, a measure that entertainment companies hope will be a powerful weapon against piracy.

The bill has garnered attention beyond France, both from music and film industries struggling to keep up official revenue and from [privacy](#)

[advocates](#) who say it threatens civil liberties.

An original, more muscular version of the bill was shot down earlier this year as unconstitutional. Legislators in the National Assembly debated a new, compromise version in July.

They are widely expected to approve it in Tuesday's vote, capping a process that has lasted more than a year. The French Senate approved the new version of the bill in July.

The Culture Ministry estimates that 1,000 French [Internet users](#) a day could be taken offline under the bill. If suspected pirates ignore e-mail warnings and a certified letter, their home Internet connections could be cut for up to a year, and they could face up to euro300,000 (\$435,000) in fines or jail time.

President Nicolas Sarkozy, the husband of model-turned-singer Carla Bruni and friend to powerful French media figures, supports the bill.

Opposition Socialists and several members of his conservative party are against it, largely because of the powers it grants a new agency, called Hadopi, that would sanction those who illegally download copyrighted material.

The bill was rejected in April, then adopted in May, then rejected by the Constitutional Council in June because it would have allowed the agency to cut off Internet connections of repeat offenders. The version being voted on Tuesday leaves it to a judge to order Internet connections cut.

Opponents say the new law misses the point by targeting downloads rather than online "streaming" - an increasingly popular approach where music and videos are played over the Internet, rather than downloaded and saved onto a user's computer.

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