

'Rogue websites' bill introduced in US House

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A man uses a laptop computer at a wireless cafe. US lawmakers introduced a bill on Wednesday that would give US authorities more tools to crack down on websites accused of piracy of movies, television shows and music and the sale of counterfeit goods.

US lawmakers introduced a bill on Wednesday that would give US authorities more tools to crack down on websites accused of piracy of movies, television shows and music and the sale of counterfeit goods.

The Stop Online Piracy Act has received bipartisan support in the House of Representatives and is the House version of a bill introduced in the Senate in May known as the Theft of Intellectual Property Act or Protect IP Act.

The legislation has received the backing of Hollywood, the music industry, the [Business Software Alliance](#), the National Association of

Manufacturers, the [US Chamber of Commerce](#) and other groups.

But it has come under fire from digital rights and free speech organizations for allegedly paving the way for US law enforcement to unilaterally shut down websites, including foreign sites, without due process.

House Judiciary Committee chairman Lamar Smith, a Republican from Texas, said the bill "helps stop the flow of revenue to rogue websites and ensures that the profits from American innovations go to American innovators.

"Rogue websites that steal and sell American innovations have operated with impunity," Smith said in a statement.

"The online thieves who run these foreign websites are out of the reach of US [law enforcement agencies](#) and profit from selling pirated goods without any legal consequences," he said.

"The bill prevents online thieves from selling counterfeit goods in the US, expands international protections for intellectual property, and protects [American consumers](#) from dangerous [counterfeit products](#)," Smith said.

Howard Berman, a Democrat from California who co-sponsored the legislation, said it is "an important next step in the fight against digital theft and sends a strong message that the United States will not waiver in our battle to protect America's creators and innovators."

The House Judiciary Committee is to hold a hearing on the bill on November 16.

The Washington-based Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT)

said the House bill "raises serious red flags.

"It includes the most controversial parts of the Senate's Protect IP Act, but radically expands the scope," the CDT said in a statement. "Any website that features user-generated content or that enables cloud-based data storage could end up in its crosshairs.

"Internet Service Providers would face new and open-ended obligations to monitor and police user behavior," the CDT said. "Payment processors and ad networks would be required to cut off business with any website that rightsholders allege hasn't done enough to police infringement.

"The [bill](#) represents a serious threat to online innovation and to legitimate online communications tools," it said.

The Obama administration has come in for some criticism for shutting down dozens of "rogue websites" over the past year as part of a crackdown known as "Operation in Our Sites."

US authorities in November, for example, shut down 82 websites selling mostly Chinese-made [counterfeit goods](#), including golf clubs, Walt Disney movies, handbags and other items.

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