

'Rogue websites' bill runs into more opposition

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The Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) 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 legislation has received the backing of Hollywood and the music industry but has come under fire from digital rights and free speech groups.

It also came in for criticism on Monday from the powerful [Consumer Electronics Association](#) (CEA), the Computer and Communications Industry Association (CCIA) and NetCoalition, whose members include [Google](#) and Yahoo!.

In a letter to [members of Congress](#), they said the legislation "has been framed by its sponsors as a vehicle to protect US trademarks and copyrights from foreign 'rogue' websites.

"While we support this concept, (the bill) puts lawful US Internet and technology companies at risk," the letter said.

"Under this bill, a foreign or domestic Internet site that has broken no US law can nevertheless have its economic lifeblood cut off upon a single notice from a copyright or trademark owner," it said.

"As currently drafted, we believe SOPA is an alarming step backwards" that would create a "litigation and liability nightmare for Internet and technology companies and social media," the letter said.

"Virtually every Internet site that allows user-generated content can be subject to suit under SOPA and the bill could force Internet companies to police their users activities," it said.

"In short, this is not a bill that targets 'rogue foreign sites.' Rather, it allows movie studios, foreign [luxury goods](#) manufacturers, patent and copyright trolls, and any holder of any intellectual property right to target lawful US websites and technology companies," the letter said.

The Stop Online Piracy Act 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.

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

"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.

The House Judiciary Committee is to hold a hearing on the [bill](#) on November 16.

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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