

Wikipedia founder hails role in US

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Jimmy Wales, founder of Wikipedia gestures during an interview with the Associated Press at the World Economic Forum, WEF, in Davos, Thursday, Jan. 26, 2012. Wales is fighting to stop a recent US plan to tighten anti-piracy laws and his vision for the open-source online encyclopedia. (AP Photo/Anja Niedringhaus)

(AP) -- The founder of Wikipedia hailed the online encyclopedia's role in helping halt U.S. legislation aimed at cracking down on Internet piracy, saying the proposed bills needed to be stopped because they were flawed.

The idea to black out Wikipedia's English pages for 24 hours came from the site's volunteer editors, who voted overwhelmingly in favor of the

move.

[Wikipedia](#) was among a number of sites that argued the Stop Online Piracy Act and the Protect Intellectual Property Act would hurt [technological innovation](#) and infringe on free-speech rights. But the protest by Wikipedia, which has 470 million visitors each month, was the most high-profile stunt last week before Congress postponed the legislation indefinitely.

"Ordinary users of the Internet who really use it for doing their own creative work and sharing it with others, really believe very strongly in the importance of Net freedom," Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales told The Associated Press in an interview Thursday.

The bills, he said, were "very badly designed, technologically incompetent, and just something that we felt needed to be stopped."

Wales said campaigners against the bills were told that with bipartisan support and strong lobbying by the movie and music industries, - who claim U.S. companies lose billions of dollars to piracy every year - meant the [legislation](#) would almost certainly pass.

"I just thought: 'You know, I don't think that's true, I think we can do something about it.' So we did. And it worked," he said.

Some of Wikipedia's editors criticized the decision to take a political stance, saying it might hurt the site's [credibility](#) as an impartial source of information.

But Wales said that most of those involved with Wikipedia had been supportive.

"The drive to do this came from our community," he said. "A very long

discussion and debate ensued that culminated in a vote that was overwhelmingly in favor."

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