

House moves ahead with cybersecurity bill (Update)

April 26 2012, By DONNA CASSATA , Associated Press

(AP) -- House Republicans are pushing ahead with legislation to protect the nation's critical infrastructure and corporations from electronic attacks despite Obama administration objections that the legislation fails to protect Americans' civil liberties.

The House begins work Thursday on the bill designed to address the [cybersecurity](#) threat by getting the private sector and government to share information to thwart attacks from foreign governments, terrorists and [cybercriminals](#). Although the information sharing is voluntary, civil liberty groups fear the measure could lead to government spying on Americans.

The administration objections run deeper.

"The sharing of information must be conducted in a manner that preserves Americans' privacy, data confidentiality and civil liberties and recognizes the civilian nature of cyberspace," the administration said in a statement Wednesday. "Cybersecurity and privacy are not mutually exclusive."

The administration also complained that the bill's liability protection for companies that share information is too broad and argued that the Homeland Security Department should have a primary role in domestic cybersecurity. In its current form, the administration said, the president's advisers would recommend a veto.

Yet, the White House opposition is not expected to derail the House bill, which has bipartisan support, [Republicans](#) and Democrats said Wednesday.

"It certainly will have an impact I think on the margin of the vote, but the bill is still likely to pass," said Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., who had hoped to amend the bill by limiting the government's ability to collect information, such as birthdays, that could be used to identify individuals. His measure reflected the concerns of the White House, but Republicans refused to allow its consideration.

A final vote on the overall bill is expected Friday.

Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Mich., the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, has worked closely with Rep. C.A. "Dutch" Ruppersberger of Maryland, the panel's top [Democrat](#), on the overall legislation as well as several amendments to clarify parts of the measure. Republicans, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and companies such as Facebook and Google are receptive to the legislation because it does not impose new regulations on businesses to share information, making that step voluntary.

One possible foe also has signaled that it won't work to defeat the bill. The Center for Democracy and Technology, a leading organization on Internet freedom, said this week that the Intelligence Committee had made "important privacy improvements" in the bill. The organization still raised concerns about the flow of Internet data to the National Security Agency.

"We will not oppose the process moving forward in the House," the group said in a statement. "We will focus on the amendments and subsequently on the Senate."

The [administration](#) backs a Senate bill sponsored by Sens. Joe Lieberman, I-Conn., and Susan Collins, R-Maine, that would give Homeland Security the authority to establish [security standards](#).

"The government applies safety standards for cars, food, building structures and toys, to name a few," Lieberman, Collins and Sens. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., and Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., said in a statement. "Why not do the same for the infrastructure that powers our economy and provides us with the highest standard of living in the world?"

However, that legislation remains stalled, facing opposition from senior Senate Republicans.

Arizona Sen. John McCain, the top Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said during a hearing last month that the Homeland Security Department is "probably the most inefficient bureaucracy that I have ever encountered" and is ill-equipped to determine how best to secure the nation's essential infrastructure. McCain has introduced a competing bill.

House Republicans are determined to secure passage of their [bill](#), a step they hope will force the Senate to act.

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