

# US lawmakers to push for online piracy bill

April 5 2011

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Democratic and Republican members of the US Congress pledged Monday to pass legislation that would give US authorities more tools to crack down on websites engaged in piracy of movies, television shows and music and the sale of counterfeit goods.

Senator Patrick Leahy, a Democrat from Vermont who chairs the Senate Judiciary Committee, said he would introduce a new version "soon" of a bill designed to combat so-called "rogue websites."

A previous bill co-sponsored by Leahy, called the Combating Online Infringement and Counterfeits Act, was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee by a 19-0 vote in November, but never made it to the Senate floor.

Leahy, speaking to reporters on Monday, said: "Online infringement and the sale of counterfeit goods costs American creators, producers, and businesses billions of dollars and results in hundreds of thousands of lost jobs.

"This theft is unacceptable at any time; it is devastating in our current economic climate," he said.

House Judiciary Committee chairman Lamar Smith, a Republican from Texas, said: "The success of our economy is in part tied to the success of America's intellectual property industries.

"From movies and music to software and medicine, IP theft drains our

economy and puts lives at risk," Smith said.

Leahy and Smith were joined by other lawmakers at the event along with representatives of the entertainment industry and labor organizations.

"The Internet has regrettably become a cash-cow for the criminals and organized crime cartels who profit from [digital piracy](#) and counterfeit products," said Representative John Conyers, a Democrat from Michigan.

The Obama administration has come in for some criticism for shutting down dozens of websites in recent months as part of a crackdown known as "Operation in Our Sites."

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

Leahy said the bill would ensure a judicial review for websites accused of engaging in illegal activities and dismissed claims it threatened First Amendment protections of free speech.

The Electronic Freedom Foundation (EFF) last year decried the previous version of Leahy's legislation as an "Internet censorship" bill.

"Blacklisting entire sites out of the domain name system" is a "reckless scheme that will undermine global Internet infrastructure and censor legitimate online speech," it said.

"I'm very concerned about the First Amendment," Leahy said Monday. "I'm also concerned about theft.

"There is no First Amendment right that protects thieves."

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Citation: US lawmakers to push for online piracy bill (2011, April 5) retrieved 22 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-04-lawmakers-online-piracy-bill.html>

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