Republicans overreach on CISPA

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New cybersecurity bill still goes too far.

Anyone who uses the Internet gets angry at spam, viruses and stolen information. Unfortunately, the U.S. House of Representatives once again is going too far in trying to keep the Internet secure. The Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act passed the House last year, but failed in the U.S. Senate partly because of a veto threat by President Barack Obama. A White House statement argued the bill would "sacrifice the privacy of our citizens in the name of security."

Now, CISPA is back, sponsored by House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers, R-Mich., and the panel's top Democrat, Maryland's Dutch Ruppersberger. The bill's current language is the same as last year's. CISPA, the bill reads, would "allow elements of the intelligence community to share cyber threat intelligence with private-sector entities and to encourage the sharing of such intelligence."

Basically, that would mean the government could have access, without a warrant, to all your information: emails, text messages, lists of Internet sites you visit, tweets – even medical information, which, under Obamacare, will be broadly shared among doctors, hospitals, HMOs and insurance companies.

"The very broad information-sharing language of CISPA extends far beyond what's necessary for providing cybersecurity," Jim Harper told us; he's the director of information studies at the libertarian Cato Institute. "They're taking a sledgehammer to a thing that needs much more careful work."

It's unfortunate that CISPA once again is being advanced by Republicans, who control the House and generally offer limited-government rhetoric. "I guess it's because they put this in the national security box," Mr. Harper said. "Republicans are the party of security. But that's not the way to look at it. There are roles for government in information security. But 80 percent should be done by the private sector."

Last year in the House, local Democratic Reps. Loretta Sanchez and Linda Sanchez joined Republican Rep. Dana Rohrabacher in voting no.

Unfortunately, it was supported by Republican Reps. Ed Royce, Gary Miller, Darrell Issa, Ken Calvert and John Campbell. Coming, as they do, from Orange County, which is known nationally for strongly supporting limited government, we hope these five Republicans this year will join Rep. Rohrabacher, as well as the Democratic Sanchez sisters, in opposing CISPA in its current form.

The Senate bill from last year was much better and should be a starting point for improving Internet security. It is always essential to affirm our Fourth Amendment right "against unreasonable searches and seizures."