



SOPA and PIPA Backlash Delightfully Continues as Six Legislators Take Back Their Support of The Bills

Lucy Steigerwald | January 18, 2012

Maybe you're sick to death of all the to-do over SOPA (the Stop Online Piracy Act and its Senate buddy the Protect Intellectual Property Act or PIPA) or you just really needed your Wikipedia fix today (don't worry, you can still read their [SOPA page!](#)). But really, isn't it awesome that people won't shut up about something actually important for once? Reason didn't participate, but don't take that as any sort of endorsement of nosy government activities. Nick Gillespie reported [earlier today on the protest](#) and how it has drawn support from all sides of the political spectrum.

What's interesting is that powerful people might be listening to this outcry as it's coming not just from the teeming masses, or from civil liberties standbys like *Salon's* Glenn Greenwald, but from powerful tech people like [Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg](#), Wikipedia owner Jimmy Wales, and of course the folks at Google.

[According to Bloomberg:](#)

Co-sponsors who say they can no longer support their own legislation include Senators Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, Roy Blunt, a Missouri Republican, and Ben Cardin, a Maryland Democrat. Republican Representatives Ben Quayle of Arizona, Lee Terry of Nebraska, and Dennis Ross of Florida also said they would withdraw their backing of the House bill.

Wired, who participated in the blackout protest, [cautions on too much celebration, however:](#) But by no sense of the imagination are these bills scuttled, despite Senate websites reportedly buckling under the weight of constituents weighing in against the measure.

Sure, the worst part of the proposals — [mandated DNS redirecting of websites deemed dedicated to infringing activity](#) — appear to be history. But there's still plenty to protest, as we [spelled out in an earlier story](#) Wednesday, including possible mandatory orders for the nation's ISPs to build a version of the Chinese Great Firewall to prevent users from visiting sites such as The Pirate Bay.

Most important, amended proposals are likely to rear their ugly heads soon in response to White House criticism of the Domain Name System features of the bills.

Rep. Lamar Smith (R-Texas) says he will bring an amended version of SOPA to the House Judiciary Committee sometime in "February." And Senate action on an amended PIPA, either on the floor or before the Senate Judiciary Committee, is tentatively scheduled next week....

Among other things, the revolt prompted Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), who voted in May to [move the Protect IP Act to the Senate floor](#) from the Judiciary Committee, to declare Wednesday that the measure "[is not ready for prime time](#)." A handful of [other lawmakers](#) echoed the senior senator's sentiment.

And Rep. Darrell Issa (R-California) [introduced a competing measure](#), with the support of more than a dozen lawmakers, that would open the [U.S. International Trade Commission](#) to investigate intellectual-property infringement claims.

All the while, at least 4.5 million internet surfers [signed a Google-sponsored petition](#) against both measures Wednesday.

Also, in case you forgot, the MPAA and the RIAA are awful:

The Motion Picture Association of America sent out a factsheet saying "Nothing in the Protect IP Act can reasonably be construed as promoting censorship."

And the Recording Industry Association of America tweeted "Perish the thought" that students must do "original research" Wednesday because of Wikipedia's self-inflicted 24-hour outage.

They're also big backers of these bills, along with the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#), [Time Warner](#), and [News Corp](#), among others with big money and big influence. News Corp overlord Rupert Murdoch has been tweeting freely about this very subject, and if you didn't loathe him before, some of his more recent tweets offer fresh [justification to do so](#).

Former Reasonoid Julian Sanchez, [over at Cato](#), is not ready to declare victory either. Because even if the more controversial elements of the bills, the ones which demand a Domain Name Service (DNS) blocking of "rogue" websites:

The Justice Department and private copyright owners can still seek to have entire foreign sites branded as infringers, triggering an array of remedies that would still deter technological investment and innovation, and still impose serious burdens on American companies and ordinary Internet users. Contrary to the claims of SOPA and PIPA supporters, copyright holders have often been perfectly able to sue the foreign "rogue sites" they cite as evidence new legislation is needed... the problem is that [sometimes, they lose](#). Instead of all that messy litigation, SOPA and PIPA would establish one-sided hearing mechanism that mocks true due process. Any site a single friendly judge deems "rogue" would still be starved of advertising and subscription revenue. American search engines and other "information location tools" would still have to filter their content to redact any links to the shunned site. As Wikileaks has learned, repressive regimes have long known, and the Supreme Court acknowledged in *Citizens United*, [economic regulation can silence speech](#) (and run afoul of the First Amendment) as effectively as overt censorship.

Whatever meaningful effect this backlash has towards the bills in their more controversial forms, the subject [is not going away](#). The anarchy of the internet is a threat to all lawmakers who don't have a clue what kids of the internet generation are doing with this freedom. Piracy is (debatably) a problem, but never doubt governmental urges to treat hangnail problems with chainsaw solutions.