



Illustration by Anna Axelsson The Clackamas Print

# Internet controversy sparks viral debate www. [redacted] .com



Opinion

By James Duncan  
Design Editor

Since their introduction to the U.S. House of Representatives on Oct. 26 by Republican representative of Texas, Lamar Smith and Sen. Patrick Leahy, Democratic senator of Vermont, the "Stop Online Piracy Act" and its sister legislation, the "Protect IP Act" have sparked controversy and a national debate concerning freedom on the Internet.

The two bills, which are being financially backed and pushed by the entertainment industry and politicians who receive most of their funds from donations from major media corporations, seeks to give the government power over "rogue websites" that are beyond U.S. jurisdiction by adding them to an "Internet Blacklist."

The proposed blacklist would use the Domain Name System which translates website names like "www.Google.com" into the IP addresses that computers use

to communicate. The legislation would also allow copyright holders to force payment processors like PayPal, credit card companies and advertisers to sever their ties with a website simply by sending out a notice, which they would have five days to comply with before action would be taken. The bill would also expand existing criminal laws to include streaming of copyright material, imposing a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

The goal is obvious; the entertainment industry wants more power to deter pirates from sharing their intellectual property and causing them financial losses. The legislation in its current form is so broad that nearly anyone and everyone who uses the Internet would be at risk of being shut down or sued.

Laws to allow copyright owners to issue take downs of material from websites already exist in the form of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, and in 2007, Universal Music Group abused that power when they went after Stephanie Lenz for her 29 second YouTube video of her baby dancing around her kitchen as Prince's "Let's Go Crazy" played on the radio. With the help of the non-profit digital rights advocacy group, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Lenz was successful in fighting back against Universal in a countersuit, claiming fair use. If SOPA and PIPA were made law, court cases like Lenz's would have very

different outcomes and fair use might become a thing of the past.

The most troubling thing about SOPA and PIPA is that copyright holders can completely bypass due process, so they don't even need to have a court trial at all. All they have to do get a site taken down is make an allegation of infringement, and many common Internet activities would fall under their definition of infringement.

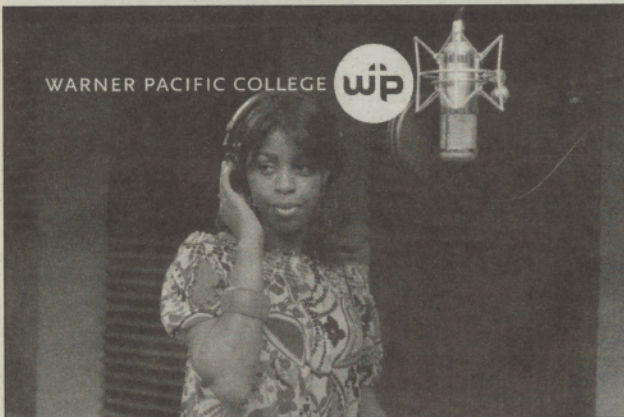
For instance, the popular Internet series "The Nostalgia Critic," in which the eponymous reviewer, Doug Walker, reviews movies and television series in a comedic manner would cease to exist, and could land the creator in jail and the website which hosted the content would be blacklisted if it failed to comply with a takedown notice within the allowed time. Another popular Internet series, in which James Rolfe, known as the "Angry Video Game Nerd," reviews poorly designed games from aging 8-bit and 16-bit consoles such as the Nintendo Entertainment System, the Super NES, and Sega Genesis, could be prosecuted and have his videos taken down.

Performing a cover of a popular song and uploading that recording to YouTube would become a crime, as would sharing the lyrics to songs on websites like Songmeanings, LeosLyrics or Sing365. Copying and pasting or quoting lines from movies, television shows or copy-

righted books would also be criminalized.

The online art community, DeviantArt, is an outlet for many users creative expressions, it's also host to numerous fan-made artworks which involve copyrighted characters from movies, TV shows, cartoons and video games, which under SOPA and PIPA, would put the user-base and site at risk of being fined or taken down. Services like Google's "Google Images" search engine, which indexes nearly 10 billion images from websites around the world, could also be subject to the power of copyright holders who would ultimately view the website as a haven of infringement.

SOPA and PIPA were barely mentioned on TV news, but in the wake of rolling Internet black outs, more people are becoming aware and taking a stand. Our generation stands at the edge of decisions that could lead to the death of the Internet as we know it today. No more arrows to the knee or auto-tuned news and no more Rick Roll! The beautiful art of parody and satire that the Internet has let flourish could be lost to us almost overnight. But, worst of all ... we might have to pay for cable to watch network television and be watching it at the time it airs! So get out there and call your state senator, write a letter, or just talk about it with your friends. Act now before the Internet belongs to SOPA.



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