

Wyden objects to anti-terrorism rules for online sites

WASHINGTON (AP) — Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat and skeptic of broad government surveillance, objected Tuesday to a bill that would have required social media and online sites like Google, Yahoo, Twitter and Facebook to alert federal authorities of any terrorist activity.

The proposal, by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., had been tucked into a broader bill authorizing intel-

ligence programs throughout the 2016 budget year and became the subject of several private meetings on Capitol Hill between congressional staff and industry officials.

In a statement submitted into the Congressional Record, Wyden said the Senate had been asked on Tuesday to approve the intelligence authorization bill by unanimous consent. Doing so would bypass any debate. A spokesman

for Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., confirmed that leadership had hoped to pass the bill before the August recess, but that not all senators were on board.

Wyden said he would insist on a debate because of “very valid concerns” made by the technology industry.

“Internet companies should not be subject to broad requirements to police the speech of their users,”

Wyden said in the statement.

Feinstein argued that the requirement was nearly identical to one related to child pornography. But tech companies said the bill was so vague it would be almost impossible to determine whether they were meeting their legal obligation, or if they were on the hook if they miss a tweet, video or blog that hints of an attack.

They said the result would probably be a deluge of tips

to law enforcement, making it tougher for the government to find more valuable information.

“The FBI and the intelligence community have made it abundantly clear that the terrorist threat is severe and increasing, and that those directing, inspiring and carrying out attacks make heavy use of social media sites,” Feinstein told The Associated Press in an emailed statement provided

last week. “This provision will help get potentially actionable information to the agencies responsible for preventing attacks, without requiring companies to take any steps to monitor their sites they aren’t already taking.”

Wyden said the FBI director told Congress that technology companies are cooperative and helpful about alerting law enforcement to serious incidents.



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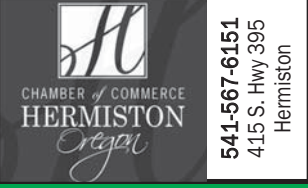
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