February 6, 2012

U.S. House of Representatives Washington, D.C. 20515

United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Congress:

We the undersigned groups align ourselves with the more than 14 million Americans who joined us in opposition to the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the PROTECT IP Act (PIPA). Together we participated in the largest online protest in American history (currently estimated at more than 115,000 websites) because we believe these bills would have been harmful to free speech, innovation, cyber security, and job creation. We want to thank the Members of Congress who shared our concerns and opposed these bills.

Now is the time for Congress to take a breath, step back, and approach the issues from a fresh perspective. A wide variety of important concerns have been expressed – including views from technologists, law professors, international human rights groups, venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, and above all, individual Internet users. The concerns are too fundamental and too numerous to be fully addressed through hasty revisions to these bills. Nor can they be addressed by closed door negotiations among a small set of inside the-beltway stakeholders.

Furthermore, Congress must determine the true extent of online infringement and, as importantly, the economic effects of that activity, from accurate and unbiased sources, and weigh them against the economic and social costs of new copyright legislation. Congress cannot simply accept industry estimates regarding economic and job implications of infringement given the Government Accountability Office's clear finding in 2010 that previous statistics and quantitative studies on the subject have been unreliable.

Finally, any future debates concerning intellectual property law in regards to the Internet must avoid taking a narrow, single-industry perspective. Too often, Congress has focused exclusively on areas where some rights holders believe existing law is too weak, without also considering the ways in which existing policies have undermined free speech and innovation. Some examples include the year-long government seizure of a lawful music blog (dajaz1.com) and the shutdown by private litigation of a lawful startup video platform (veoh.com).

The Internet's value to the public makes it necessary that any legislative debate in this area be open, transparent, and sufficiently deliberative to allow the full range of interested parties to offer input and to evaluate specific proposals. To avoid doing so would be to repeat the mistakes of SOPA and PIPA.

Sincerely,

106 Miles Access Access Humboldt American Library Association Amicus Amnesty International (USA) Art Is Change Asana Association of College and Research Libraries Automattic **Canvas Networks** Center for Democracy & Technology Center for Media Justice Center for Rural Strategies Cheezburger Network ColorofChange.org **Consumers Union Demand Progress** Democracy for America Don't Censor the Net **Electronic Frontier Foundation Engine Advocacy Entertainment Consumers Association** F2C: Freedom to Connect Fight for the Future Foundry Group Free Press Action Fund Free Speech TV Hackers & Founders Hatterv Human Rights Defense Center Human Rights Watch InSparq Institute for Local Self-Reliance Internet Archive Learning About Multimedia Project Main Street Project Mayfirst/People Link Media Alliance Media Literacy Project Media Mobilizing Project Mom's Rising Mountain Area Information Network Mozilla

NAMAC Native Public Media New America Foundation's Open **Technology** Initiative New Media Rights NY Tech Meetup OATV OpenCongress.org OpenGovernment.org O'Reilly Media Participatory Politics Foundation PCUN Oregon Farmworkers Union People's Production House Presente.org Public Knowledge reddit inc. **Reel Grrls** Save Hosting Coalition SF New Tech Startup Weekend SV Angel Teethie, Inc **Thousand Kites** Tucows Inc. Twitpic Inc. Women In Media & News Women Who Tech Women, Action & the Media Women's Media Center WordPress Foundation