



THE UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF MAYORS

1620 EYE STREET, NORTHWEST
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20006
TELEPHONE (202) 293-7330
FAX (202) 293-2352
TDD (202) 293-9445
URL: www.usmayors.org/uscm

November 29, 2011

The Honorable Lamar Smith
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Conyers:

We write on behalf of America's mayors in support of your bill, H.R. 3261, the Stop Online Piracy Act, which would strengthen the capacity of U.S. law enforcement to take action against foreign "rogue" websites that traffic in stolen and counterfeit American-made films, television shows, music, and other goods, threatening jobs and local economies in cities across the country.

While counterfeiting and content theft is not new, the proliferation and extent of these activities are unprecedented today. Criminals have turned to the Internet, abusing its virtually unlimited distribution opportunities to expand their illicit activities and profits. Many of these sites are based overseas, yet rely on U.S. Internet service providers, search engines, payment processors, and advertising services to reach U.S. consumers. Some rogue sites dupe Internet users into thinking they are legitimate, accepting major credit cards as forms of payment and featuring advertising from blue chip U.S. companies. And they are succeeding; a recent study found that just a small sample of 43 rogue sites generate over 53 billion visits a year.

All of this has a very real – and very damaging – impact. Intellectual property companies together make up more than a third of the U.S. economy and employ more than 19 million workers in all 50 states. The film and television industry alone counts more than two million men and women working in production and related businesses. If we cannot protect their intellectual property from theft, businesses will be unable to justify investments in R&D for innovative new products, films, TV programs and music will go unproduced, and jobs and earnings will decline. Even worse, counterfeit products are often of inferior quality or outright harmful design, posing a serious threat to the health, safety, and wellbeing of our citizens and to the reputation, brand integrity, and value of great companies all across this nation.

Federal legislation can be used to stop these rogue sites and protect jobs, and I'm pleased that both the House and Senate have turned their attention to this major problem with the introduction of S. 968 in the Senate and the planned introduction of companion legislation in the House. To effectively disrupt the rogue sites' business model, law enforcement needs the authority to enlist the help of other players in the Internet ecosystem, including infrastructure providers like ISPs and financial service providers like payment processors, to cut these sites off from the American marketplace.

November 29, 2011

Page 2

This narrowly tailored response will help encourage Internet users to find legitimate sources for goods and content, and will ensure that counterfeiters and pirates can no longer profit from this clearly illegal activity.

The nation's mayors appreciate your sponsorship of this important bill and urge Congress to make the enactment of rogue site legislation a top priority this year.

Sincerely,



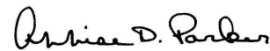
Antonio R. Villaraigosa
Mayor of Los Angeles
President



Michael A. Nutter
Mayor of Philadelphia
First Vice President



Scott Smith
Mayor of Mesa
Second Vice President
Committee



Annise D. Parker
Mayor of Houston
Chair, Criminal and Social Justice



Mitch Landrieu
Mayor of New Orleans
Chair, Tourism, Arts, Parks,
Entertainment and Sports Committee



Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director