

# Commentary » KENNETH C. WISNEFSKI

## SHIFTING THE BALANCE

In the digital age, Internet security is a growing concern among Web users not only domestically, but on a world-wide scale.

Since its inception, the Internet itself has remained free of international censorship and government oversight. However, cybersecurity is an issue that continues to create controversy, as some believe that a truly secure Internet may only be possible by sacrificing user privacy.

Recently, proposed bills such as the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA) have stalled, largely because of negative backlash by Internet companies and, more importantly, the Obama administration. The intent of those bills was to eliminate piracy of copyrighted material online by allowing the government to block Web sites. President Obama responded by saying that such bills could potentially stifle innovation and damage the integrity of the Web.

But after enduring two online attacks to my companies' reputation and databases, I've come to the conclusion that the protection businesses would get from the legislation is worth sacrificing privacy.

About a year ago, my company

*New rules must favor cybersecurity over individual privacy*

WebiMax was attacked by a person who stole our logo, created a mock Web site and misappropriated our tagline — Experience, Integrity, Results. He changed it to: "No experience, lack of integrity, no results." He posted commentary about WebiMax that was false and painted a negative image of us.

We got a preliminary injunction and the hosting company pulled it down. Three months later it popped back up on a hosting company in Ireland that works beyond the boundaries of the law. We believe we would not be going through this if the SOPA measure were in effect.

A few years ago, someone hacked into the database at my first venture, VendorSeek.com. They were able to access back-end data, including credit card information. Luckily, we caught it before too much damage was done, but authorities never found out who was responsible.

Now a new proposal aimed at providing businesses the necessary tools

to strengthen online security, called the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA), is facing similar controversy.

Should CISPA be signed into law, it would grant any agency the power to attain user information from sites such as Facebook, Google or any other private company in the event of a "cyber threat." Any gathered information on users suspected of involvement in such threats would then be forwarded to the Department of Homeland Security.

CISPA has been approved by the House. However, Obama has already announced that he will veto the bill.

Opponents of the measures raise the privacy concerns stemming from the government's proposed authority to monitor online activity and shut down Web sites that violate copyright laws.

I agree with that sentiment. I'd hate to have someone from the government reading my e-mails, too. But the reality is the protection the measures could offer businesses are worth the sacrifice in privacy to prevent another worst-case scenario.

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