

April 3, 2013

Dear Members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence,

We write to urge you to open the markup of the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act (CISPA), HR 624, scheduled for the week of April 8th.

The public has a right to know how Congress is conducting the people's business, particularly when such important wide-ranging policies are at stake. There have been many public calls by Members of Congress and administration officials about the importance of adopting cybersecurity legislation. Yet, many of our organizations have raised serious concerns about the threats to privacy and civil liberties and to the public's right to know posed by CISPA, and the need for fundamental changes to this bill to protect those rights. Although the base bill, HR 624, has been made public, it is also critical that the public be aware of any amendments under consideration, and the debate over such amendments.

It's time to bring this process into the light of day.

All congressional committee hearings and votes should be conducted in accordance with our country's highest principles of transparency and openness and made accessible to the public. Certainly, there are special exceptions when a committee can and should move to closed session to consider properly classified information, but this step should be taken only in specific instances where needed. The general rule should be open government.

As you know, it is the practice of most other committees not only to open their markups, but also to webcast them and share the text of the legislation in advance of voting. Closure of the entire markup is unwarranted.

We hope that you will apply these principles for more openness and democracy to the markup of CISPA. We urge all committee members to support an open markup and to post the amendments to be considered online in advance of voting.

Sincerely,

Access

American Association of Law Libraries  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Library Association  
Association of Research Libraries  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee  
Center for Democracy & Technology  
Center for Media and Democracy  
Center for National Security Studies  
Center for Rights  
The Constitution Project  
Cyber Privacy Project  
Daily Kos  
Defending Dissent Foundation  
Demand Progress  
DownsizeDC.org, Inc.  
Electronic Frontier Foundation  
Electronic Privacy Information Center  
Entertainment Consumers Association  
Fight for the Future

Free Press Action Fund  
Government Accountability Project  
Liberty Coalition  
MapLight  
Mozilla  
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers  
National Coalition Against Censorship  
New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute  
NY Tech Meetup  
OpenMedia  
OpenTheGovernment.org  
Personal Democracy Media  
PolitiHacks  
@PrivacyCamp  
Project on Government Oversight  
RootsAction.org  
Society of Professional Journalists  
Sunlight Foundation  
Utah Foundation for Open Government  
Washington Civil Rights Council  
Washington Coalition for Open Government