

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