April 26, 2012

Dear Representative:

We the undersigned organizations urge you to vote ‘no’ on H.R. 3523, the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act of 2011 (CISPA). We are gravely concerned that this bill will allow companies that hold very sensitive and personal information to liberally share it with the government, which could then use the information without meaningful oversight for purposes unrelated to cybersecurity. The House Rules Committee has denied votes on key civil liberties amendments, including amendments that would ensure that private communications information does not flow directly to a military intelligence agency in the name of cybersecurity, and to ensure that information shared for cybersecurity reasons is not used for unrelated national security purposes. Because votes on key civil liberties amendments have been blocked, our opposition will continue even if amendments made in order by the Rules Committee pass.

CISPA creates an exception to all privacy laws to permit companies to share our information with each other and with the government in the name of cybersecurity. Although a carefully-crafted information sharing program that strictly limits the information to be shared and includes robust privacy safeguards could be an effective approach to cybersecurity, CISPA lacks such protections for individual rights. CISPA’s ‘information sharing’ regime allows the transfer of vast amounts of data, including sensitive information like internet use history or the content of emails, to any agency in the government including military and intelligence agencies like the National Security Agency or the Department of Defense Cyber Command. Once in government hands, this information can be used for undefined ‘national security’ purposes unrelated to cybersecurity.

While many of the amendments that will be brought up for a vote would enhance civil liberties to some degree and are worthy of support, key amendments that address the fundamental civil liberties issues in the bill have been left behind. Even if a number of amendments are adopted, on balance CISPA will still needlessly and unjustifiably impinge on Americans’ privacy because amendments that are imperative won’t even be considered. We strongly urge you to vote ‘no.’

Sincerely,

Access
American Association of Law Libraries
American Civil Liberties Union
Association of Research Libraries
Hon. Bob Barr
Competitive Enterprise Institute
Center for Democracy & Technology
Center for Financial Privacy and Human Rights
The Constitution Project
Cyber Privacy Project
Demand Progress
Doctor Patient Medical Association
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Entertainment Consumers Association

Fight for the Future, Center for Rights
Free Press Action Fund
Liberty Coalition
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
New America Foundation's Open Technology Institute
OpenTheGovernment.org
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse
The Rutherford Institute
World Privacy Forum

Cyber Privacy Project
Demand Progress
Doctor Patient Medical Association
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Entertainment Consumers Association