



Republican U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman has come out in opposition to the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA), explaining that he sees how the legislation could act to tamp down free expression and business innovation.

“SOPA may have the best of intentions to protect property rights and copyrighted materials from illegal use,” he is quoted to say in a release issued this afternoon, “but the possible restriction of free speech and burdensome regulations on the activities of legitimate websites, many of which are small businesses, force me to oppose the bill.”

SOPA was temporarily shelved this but is very likely to come back, pushed by big-money entertainment industry campaign donors and lobbyists.

The bill and its companion in the Senate, the Protect IP Act, known as PIPA, have stirred widespread grassroots and business opposition, which culminated today in an online protest, a sort of digital sit-down strike that saw major websites such as Wikipedia and Reddit shut down. Coffman is the third member of the nine-member Colorado delegation to come out against the bills. He joins Colorado Democrats Rep Jared Polis and Sen Mark Udall.

Coffman's also joins high-profile conservative members of Congress, including South Carolina Rep Jim DeMint, Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan and Florida freshman Rep Marco Rubio. DeMint tweeted his opposition:

“I support intellectual property rights, but I oppose SOPA & PIPA. They're misguided bills that will cause more harm than good.”

A week and a half ago, Ryan sent out a release explaining his opposition.

“The internet is one of the most magnificent expressions of freedom and free enterprise in history. It should stay that way. While H.R. 3261, the Stop Online Piracy Act, attempts to

address a legitimate problem, I believe it creates the precedent and possibility for undue regulation, censorship and legal abuse. I do not support H.R. 3261 in its current form and will oppose the legislation should it come before the full House.”

The Hill reported that Rubio dropped his support for the bill after considering arguments made by the bill’s critics.

“Earlier this year, this bill passed the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously and without controversy,” he reportedly wrote on his Facebook page. “Since then, we’ve heard legitimate concerns about the impact the bill could have on access to the Internet and about a potentially unreasonable expansion of the federal government’s power to impact the Internet. Congress should listen and avoid rushing through a bill that could have many unintended consequences.”

The Wall Street Journal came out for the bill but downplayed conservative opposition. National Tea Party blog RedState, for example, opposes the legislation.

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