

In the past several weeks, Americans have become increasingly aware of two pieces of legislation currently being debated in Congress: the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) in the House and the Senate's Protect IP Act (PIPA). There's no doubt that online piracy is a problem, and the protection of intellectual property is one of the duties the Constitution sets for Congress. But, just like with doctors, we must ensure that the solution does not do more damage.

Serious concerns have been raised about how SOPA and PIPA would work. Recognizing this, the bills' two sponsors each agreed to remove a provision that would directly change the technical infrastructure of the Internet and which cybersecurity experts in the public and private sectors had worried would damage how the Internet itself works, not just how we use it. But, even without this provision, there remain areas of real concern about how these bills would go about combating copyright infringement.

The Internet is a technological marvel that has reshaped our economy and our lives. Like any tool, it can be used for ill as well as for good. That's why it's so important that we bring together experts in the technical aspects of the Internet with experts on intellectual property and law enforcement to craft a bill that does what the proponents of SOPA and PIPA want. There is common consensus that intellectual property should be protected. The bills' opponents need not deny this fact to be concerned about how it seeks to achieve that goal.

As with the many other challenges we face, like extending the payroll tax cut to help working Americans and strengthen our economy, Congress can find a way to combat online piracy without damaging the Internet or its innocent users if we are willing to work together. We need to share our ideas, compromise, and cooperate but, if we do so, there is nothing we cannot do.