



## Website Suppression

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Censors are on the march ... seemingly everywhere. Strike them down one place, they pop up three others.

Or, in the U.S., two: the House and the Senate.

“Earlier this year, U.S. Rep. Zoe Lofgren introduced a new pirate site blocking bill, titled the Foreign Anti-Digital Piracy Act,” we [read](#) at *Torrent Freak*, which goes on to tell us that, in late July, “a similar proposal was introduced by Senators Tillis, Coons, Blackburn, and Schiff. The bipartisan bill, titled *Block Bad Electronic Art and Recording Distributors* (Block BEARD), aims to introduce a legal mechanism for rightsholders to request site blocking orders.”

Ostensibly, the [Block BEARD Act](#) targets websites accused of harboring pirated materials.

But *Reclaim the Net* [observes](#) that the legislation would establish “a formal, court-approved process that could be used to make entire websites vanish from the American internet.” ISPs would have to obey orders to take down websites.

Once government has this new means of torpedoing websites, what counts as prohibition-worthy content could easily expand. The bill doesn’t require transparency, so the public would not have to be told what sites are being blocked.

Or why.

Or for how long.

*Reclaim the Net* points to how easily the “takedown notice” provision of the 1998 Digital Millennium Copyright Act has been weaponized to censor content in the name of protecting copyright. Everyone from artists to political activists have had content scrubbed because of DMCA notices for work “that clearly falls under fair use, commentary, or criticism.”

Platforms eager to avoid liability delete content even when a DMCA claim is clearly illegitimate. Then publishers must engage in a time-consuming legal process to *maybe* obtain permission to restore the censored material.

If the Block BEARD Act is enacted, suddenly whole websites, not just individual pages, could be unjustly disappeared so skittish ISPs can avoid liability. Can we trust the U.S. government—and various disgruntled people—to possess that power?

This is Common Sense. I’m Paul Jacob.