

The Declaration of Internet Freedom

AN ISSUE BRIEF

What is the Declaration of Internet Freedom?

- The Declaration is a set of five principles drafted by the core people and organizations involved in beating back SOPA and PIPA, two bills that would have irrevocably harmed the open Internet.
- The Declaration outlines one vision of how we can protect online innovation and expression. It is not a policy document or something that is supposed to directly lead us to a specific policy. It's the starting point for discussion and debate that we hope will bring more people together in a conversation about how best to protect the open Internet.
- The five principles are intentionally broad. They are meant to inspire future policies that affect the Internet.

Why are we doing this?

- Both bad government policies and private corporations seeking to control our online experience pose a threat to the open Internet.
- We must build a movement of millions of Internet users willing to fight *for* something — to take proactive steps to protect the open Internet instead of merely mobilizing to fight harmful bills and corporate abuses.
- Internet users must have a seat at the table whenever policymakers consider rules or laws affecting the Internet.

What are the threats?

- One-sided bills like SOPA and PIPA and secretly negotiated international treaties like ACTA included harmful provisions and were developed without the involvement of regular Internet users.
- Big companies like AT&T, Comcast and Verizon want to control and monetize the Internet, and will limit our ability to speak freely online to get their intended result. Case in point: Verizon has said it has a First Amendment right to “edit” our online speech.

What do we believe in?

- We believe that the Declaration's five core principles — expression, access, openness, innovation and privacy — are fundamental to Internet freedom.

What do we want from government?

- Policymakers must include the public in any process of crafting legislation, treaties and policies that affect the Internet.

What do we want from industry?

- We want private companies to adhere to these five core principles. We recognize that consumer protections and oversight may be necessary to prevent abuses of market power by companies that benefit financially from ignoring these principles.

What do we want from people?

- We want people to read (and sign) the Declaration.
- We want people to feel free to agree or disagree with the Declaration, to remix it and to discuss it in their communities.
- We want to build a movement to protect Internet freedom and to implement these five core principles in law, in policy and in practice.

Share your story:

- Tell your congressional member why free expression on the Internet is important to you and your community. Talk about how blocking or limiting your speech or other parts of the Internet would affect you.
- Talk about how Internet access (or the lack of it) has affected you and whether you have always been able to get affordable high-speed Internet in your home or community.
- Talk about how you use the open Internet to connect, communicate, write, read, watch, speak, listen, learn, create and innovate.
- Talk about how innovation is important to you and your community and the cool things you and people around you have done with the Internet.
- Talk about why controlling your private information is important to you and your community. Explain how government policies or corporate practices that compromise your control of that information would affect you.
- In all of these points, be specific. Tell a story that is memorable and impactful.

