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## Independent musicians' trade group comes out in support of SOPA, PIPA

### Wye Oak, others balk

January 18, 2012 | By Erik Maza | The Baltimore Sun

A couple of controversial, Internet piracy bills in Congress have pit the tech industry against the music business, even independents.

In a statement sent out early Wednesday afternoon, A2IM, the largest trade organization of independent musicians and labels, was the latest to support the Stop Online Piracy and the Protect Intellectual Property acts, despite that some high-profile indie musicians, like Baltimore's Wye Oak, are protesting the bills.

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"Our members are small and medium sized independent businesses that invest in the creation of music and whose very existence is being threatened by the availability of illegal content online," the statement said.

It puts the indie trade organization in unusual company: the other groups supporting the bills are giants of industry, like News Corporation., the Recording Industry Association of America, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

A number of websites, including Wikipedia, Google, and Mozilla, today launched highly visible campaigns in protest of the bills; Wikipedia shut down in protest Wednesday. Over 100 college professors have also urged Congress to alter the proposed bills.

Together, SOPA, in the House of Representatives, and PIPA, in the Senate, are meant to do something about what almost everyone agrees is a serious issue: copyright and trademark infringement online.

Advocates say media companies, "content creators," in their words, need a way to take down websites, or links, hosting illegally obtained content, like a song or a movie. In Maryland, most politicians have not staked out a position.

But critics say, it would give media companies too much leverage, as it would allow them to demand Internet service providers, search engines, even credit card companies to stop hosting or stop doing business with an Internet site deemed in violation of a trademark or copyright.

"Giving this enormous new power not just to the government but to any copyright and trademark owner would not only disrupt the operations of the allegedly infringing web site without a final judgment of wrongdoing," according to a petition signed by 108 college professors. "But would make it extraordinarily difficult for advertisers and credit card companies to do business on the Internet."