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Digital Rights Management

CSPP member companies are committed to developing and deploying digital rights management (DRM) technologies that protect content, consumer choice and innovation. Numerous technologies -- both hardware and software based -- have already been introduced in the marketplace to enable online distribution of digital goods. CSPP and other IT companies have invested, literally, millions of dollars in developing DRM technologies.

Further, CSPP member companies and the IT community in general have worked with the content industries in developing technology standards to enable secure online distribution of copyrighted material (examples include SDMI, CPRM 5C etc.)

The challenge of copyright protection technologies is to deliver systems that provide security for copyright owners and are acceptable to consumers. Entertainment companies want security against piracy before releasing their best titles in new digital formats. However, in a competitive market, new copyright protection technologies also must be accepted by consumers. If protections are too cumbersome or interfere with system performance, consumers in the past have rejected the new format and the associated IT or consumer electronics products.

CSPP believes that Digital Rights Management (DRM) technologies should be developed in response to marketplace demands. Further, any standards relating to DRM technologies should be developed through an open, voluntary and consensus-based process that includes input from all stakeholders. It is unlikely that a single DRM technology or standard will meet the needs of all future devices or online distribution business models.

While CSPP shares the concerns of the content community regarding digital piracy, it is opposed to government mandates for DRM technologies. Such mandates would likely result in a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to meet marketplace demands.

Congress is contemplating legislation that would require a singular standard for digital rights management technologies. The proposed legislation would mandate that all future "digital devices" include and utilize "certified" security standards.

The legislation being considered would require that the content and IT industries develop a DRM standard in an 18-month period. If agreement on a standard -- which would apply to a vast variety of electronic devices -- could not be reached in that time, the act would impose a government-created standard on the marketplace.

CSPP believes such legislation would be an unwarranted intrusion by government into the commercial marketplace and would likely result in a standard that would be rejected in the marketplace.

Congress should reject efforts to impose government into the emerging marketplace for online commerce and should allow the IT and consumer electronics industry, working with the content community, to develop DRM technologies that meet consumer demand while satisfying the need to protect the content providers.