

The Rise of the Internet Defense League

July 19, 2012

Turning the force of a historical moment into a mere historical footnote takes little more than managing to squander momentum. A loose coalition of Internet companies, advocacy groups and individuals are working to ensure that doesn't happen in the wake of SOPA/PIPA. Enter the [Internet Defense League](#) [1], (IDL) which officially launched today.

The IDL, of which CDT is a member, fits the vision that this new movement should think and act like an Internet start-up. That vision was offered last month by CDT President Leslie Harris during a [keynote speech](#) [2] at the [Personal Democracy Forum](#) [3]. Harris noted that the nascent movement is seeking to define itself and cultivate the relationships needed to sustain its efforts:

"We need to give ourselves the space to innovate, experiment and evolve. We have to figure out how to meld together our skills and strategies in the service of our common goal. We need to form and test new partnerships, build our collective knowledge and deepen our trust in each other."

While the idea of the IDL was germinating, another effort sprang up, spun from the energy created by the [SOPA victory](#) [4]: The [Declaration for Internet Freedom](#) [5]. In a [CDT blog post](#) [6], Kevin Bankston, director of CDT's Free Expression Project, said of the Declaration:

[T]he five core principles... are consistent with the values that CDT has promoted for nearly twenty years in its ongoing mission to 'keep the Internet open, innovative, and free.' The Declaration celebrates and seeks to protect the core features of the Internet that have made it such a powerful global platform for free expression and innovation, the same features we recently outlined in the wake of the SOPA debate in our paper "[What Every Policy Maker Should Know About the Internet](#) [7]": open, decentralized, and interoperable, with no gatekeepers.

The Declaration is meant only as a compass point -- its language is not set in stone and debate is encouraged. It is the defense of principles like those in the Declaration that forms the foundation of the IDL. The IDL describes itself as "a network of people and sites who use their massive combined reach to defend the open internet and make it better. Because it can sound the alarm quickly to millions of users, people are calling it 'a bat-signal for the Internet.'"

Not every member will sign on to all the actions that flow from the League. The IDL says that its members will choose "on a case-by-case basis" what actions they will participate in. And that's how it should be.

No one involved in this burgeoning net freedom movement should claim that there are no rough edges, nor that the path to efforts such as the creation of the IDL or the drafting of the Declaration are frictionless. The movement is still in "beta mode." In the process new relationships will be formed, strategies will be tightened, new muscles flexed and the adrenaline of advocacy will be channeled into a skill set that's ready and willing to step up and defend the Internet, whenever that call goes out.

- [SOPA](#)
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- [PIPA](#)
- [internet freedom](#)
- [Internet Defense League](#)
- [global Internet freedom](#)

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[1] <http://internetdefenseleague.org/>

[2] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/leslie-harris/sopa-internet-congress_b_1587389.html

[3] <http://personaldemocracy.com/conference/>

[4] <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2012/01/internet-wins-sopa-and-pipa-both-shelved/>

[5] <http://www.internetdeclaration.org/freedom>

[6] <https://www.cdt.org/blogs/kevin-bankston/0207moment-movement-declaration-internet-freedom>

[7] <https://www.cdt.org/files/pdfs/What-Every-Policy-Maker-Should-Know.pdf>