There is an old saying that goes "Time heals all wounds.", in most cases this is true, but when it comes to government policy this is usually not the case. Since the start of this year the US government has been fighting to pass a gamut of bills that will help fight piracy, but they have failed repeatedly. Aside from infringing on the rights of the country's citizens, these bills may end up being economically devastating. Piracy in itself can leave a void in company budgets, but these bills may restrict the creative works of startups causing the existing big dollar companies to become even more of a monopoly than they already are. This bill will also increase costs of patrolling the internet, increase the number of barriers that companies have to worry about when making an online presence, and a spike in government spending caused by the costs of drafting and voting on said bills.

With the introduction of SOPA and PIPA several months ago, a massive public outcry against these bills begun. With physical protests, petitions with millions of signatures, and websites shutting down to join in on the fight against these bills it should be obvious something is wrong. There haven't been any in depth economic impact reports for these bills, but using some basic economics one will see that these bills will do more harm than good.

There are several characteristics that describe a monopolistic market, but one of the most important is the number of entry barriers. The market is currently leaning more toward a monopoly in the entertainment industry. There is a lot of product differentiation, it is very cost prohibitive, as many of the movies produced are well over $50 million in production costs according to the IMDB website. These two restrictions alone keep many new companies from entering into the film industry, but when you place an additional barrier into the playing field, a whole new level of difficulty has been reached.

Even though the past bills have been shot down, many new ones are waiting in queue for their turn to be voted on, the latest being a bill called CISPA. This piece of legislation has many of the same features as the old bills did, but they also threw in some additional wording that makes this double as a national security bill. This is dangerous because it is hiding the same bad legislation that was shot several times before. The drafting of said works costs the US a lot of money that could be put into fixing other broken sections of the government, such as education. Instead of reallocating these funds the legislators and congressmen keep pushing for these bills hoping one will pass. This may spark a question; Why would they want this so badly? The answer lies in the word "lobbyist". According to Mariam Webster this word is defined as "someone who is employed to persuade legislators to vote for legislation that favors the lobbyist's employer.". How is this related to the censorship and anti-piracy bills? Simple, the multi-billion dollar record industry hired lobbyists to give congress an incentive to vote the bills through. Many legislators make their money by passing bills to receive their incentive pay, that can make them millions per year. This kind of corruption leaves us with a broken government. The government operates on a system of checks and balances, but when an outside force comes into play and persuades the very people who are a part of this self-balancing system, illegitimate and destructive legislation can slide through "unnoticed" and can cause real damage in the long run.

In the short term these bills may not have a huge negative impact; piracy will decrease out of fear of prosecution, illegal content will be stripped from the web, and profits may rise for the record industry. What happens when we look far into the future though? The picture is much more grim; people will have been prosecuted and thrown in prison with little or no trial at all, barriers will be so great that even with an original idea no new companies will be entering into the industry, and the ones who do will be bought by the media giants. Artists will have a more difficult time producing completely original content, as even the reuse of a theme or common phrase can lead to infringement. And worst of   
  
all, the record companies will likely not be making a significant amount of additional profit. The people who were previously stealing movies will find ways around these blocks and will return to other thrifty ways of acquiring content while everyone has to fight firmer content restrictions. The situation is grim at best, and the only benefit is that the record industry will have the power to prosecute on their own.

All in all, this new legislation has a long way to go before it will be ready to be passed. Aside from infringing on the rights of the US citizens and potentially creating an unstable, easily censored internet, the economic downfalls of passing any bills similar to SOPA, PIPA, ACTA, and now CISPA are gargantuan. There will be increased costs of monitoring and cracking down on piracy, new government offices will have to be opened to help monitor for infringing activity, new barriers will be put up making the entertainment industry even more of a monopoly, and the list goes on. Next time you are given the opportunity to act against these corrupt pieces of legislation, make your voice be heard. The future is a beautiful place, let us keep it that way.