Many presentations covering controversial topics spark a lot of heated and opinionated debate; the topic of internet censorship is no exception. There has been a continuous battle between the publishing companies and the individuals who pirate their content over the past decade. The web has helped support this illicit behavior, and the publishing firms are fighting back saying that their current set of tools is not enough. In October 2011 two bills left the drafting phase and were pushed into the Senate and House for voting. These bills are known as SOPA and PIPA; together they bring a gamut of new powers to private companies for handling copyright infringement. Piracy is a huge problem in today's society and something needed to be done. In response, the government drafted and proposed these bills which would provide the corporations with a way to help cut back on piracy. There are systems currently in place, but the process is long, tedious, and usually doesn't end in prosecution. Bills like these may seem like a great idea, but the way they were designed left many landmines in the path to approval and they were met with massive opposition. After educating myself, I chose to join the opposition for several reasons, a lack of economic benefit, the stripping of our rights as Americans and the chance to abuse the powers granted.

Record companies have fought tooth and nail to prevent the piracy of their products, but there is no sound economic proof that it will actually help. They argue that the loss of revenue due to illegal downloads is massive. In my opinion by preventing piracy it will not necessarily increase their profit margins by much. The people downloading, for the most part, have "viable" reasons. It is possible that the content is cost prohibitive, they have another device that allows the playback of digital content that cannot be ripped from the disk they rightfully own, or the possibility that the product they purchased was accidentally deleted and they weren't given the option to re-download it. In my opinion there simply isn't an incentive to purchase content if the reasons above are applicable, and there are numerous other times when this is also the case. I strongly believe that there simply isn't enough evidence to show that by making piracy more difficult to get away with unseen that the companies will regain those "lost" profits.

In addition to the lack of economic gains, many opponents to the bills believe that the freedom of speech is being impeded on. With these bills, it is no longer the government solely determining the outcome of the prosecutions. This power and many more would now be in the hands of the private corporations. In addition to allowing the companies to prosecute sooner, they will now have the ability to take down entire websites they *believe* are infringing on the law. In both documents the definition of piracy is so vague that it would be possible, with the right wording, to misinterpret a negative comment against a company or individual as a form of infringement. In addition to this, any website can be taken offline without probable cause or prior notice. Even if a website has no content whatsoever that is breaking the law, just by having an enemy in a company with these privileges your site could be taken offline. The only way to get it back would be to hire a lawyer and fight it in court. Even if you win the case, you as a website owner have lost.

On the other side of the argument there are many people who are wholly for the passing of said bills. Even though the group is a small percentage of people, take a look at who the advocates are; they are the record and film industries themselves, people who have stocks in these massive businesses, and individuals who either rarely use the web to its fullest extent, who are misinformed due to the lack of unbiased news, or those who haven't read through the legislation. Many people fight that the record companies could bring in massive amounts of profit. As I had outlined before, this may not necessarily be the true. Even if it was, the entertainment industry is only a small part of the economy as a whole. Even if the sales did all end up being restored, how much would it help the US as a whole? Probably not enough to justify stripping the country's citizens of their freedoms. The group who is in favor of the bills has argued that there are no other alternatives, that the battle has gone on too long that it needs to finally come to an end. This may be seen like a last ditch effort as far as legislation goes, but there are definitely alternatives. As a quick example I would buy many more movies if they were sold with more options when purchased. You can currently only rent movies in their digital forms. If I could purchase one for download, and keep it to put on as many devices as I wish, as long as they were mine, I would be significantly more open to frequently purchasing this content. To buy it and only be able to watch or listen to it on one device a set number of times is ridiculous. In the past, when you bought a record or CD you could use it in any device and use it as many times as you liked. This kind of freedom would open the industry to much less theft and even introduce more needed flexibility and innovation that is currently being hindered. Personally I believe the legislation should stay as-is. There are tools available now that let these companies take down the heavy hitters of the piracy industry, but the root of the problem comes from technology advancing and this industry refusing to put money into innovation and moving forward. As technology improves their customers' needs change, to keep this industry as successful as possible they need to learn to improve and adapt to the customers' needs.