

Statement of

The Honorable Patrick Leahy

United States Senator
United States Senate
September 7, 2011

Today, the Committee holds an important hearing on cybercrime. Protecting American consumers and businesses from cybercrime and other threats in cyberspace has been a priority of this Committee for many years. We continue that bipartisan tradition today.

I thank Senator Grassley for working closely with me on this hearing. Cybercrime impacts all of us, regardless of political party or ideology. I look forward to our continued partnership as the Committee, and the Congress, considers cybersecurity legislation.

Developing a comprehensive strategy for cybersecurity is one of the most pressing challenges facing our Nation today. In just the last few months, we have witnessed major data breaches at Sony, Epsilon, RSA, the International Monetary Fund, and Lockheed Martin -- just to name a few. Our Government computer networks have not been spared -- as evidenced by the hacking incidents involving the Senate and Central Intelligence Agency websites.

We cannot afford to ignore these threats, or the impact on our privacy and security. That is why the Committee will carefully examine the Obama administration's proposals for new legal tools to help law enforcement investigate and prosecute cybercrime today.

I thank and commend the dedicated men and women at the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security, and elsewhere across our Government, who are on the frontlines of the battle against cybercrime. Every day, they are successfully investigating and disrupting the growing threats to our cybersecurity.

In July, the FBI announced that it had arrested more than a dozen individuals associated with a group of computer hackers called Anonymous, after the group allegedly launched a series of cyberattacks on Government and private networks. The Secret Service recently announced a successful cybercrime investigation that led to the Federal indictment of an individual alleged to have hacked into the computer system at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, resulting in the theft of more than four million scientific and academic articles.

These are just two examples of the many accomplishments of our law enforcement community in this area. But with each new victory, we are challenged by even greater threats and even more cunning cyber thieves. A recent report by the computer security firm Symantec found that on any given day, an average of 6,797 websites harbor malware, or other unwanted programs -- an increase of 25.5 percent since June 2011.

I am pleased that representatives from the Department of Justice and the Secret Service are here

to share their views on how the new criminal tools in the Obama administration's cybersecurity proposal will help us to confront this challenge. Later this week, the Committee will consider these proposals and other privacy measures in my comprehensive data privacy and security legislation. I hope that the Committee will promptly report this legislation on a bipartisan basis, as it has done three times before.

To build a secure future for our Nation and its citizens in cyberspace, Congress must work together -- across party lines and ideology -- to address the dangers of cybercrime and other cyber threats. This is a national issue that we must address. I hope that all Members of the Committee will join me in bringing this bipartisan spirit to this hearing and to our work cybersecurity legislation. I thank both of our witnesses for appearing today. I look forward to a good discussion.

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