House Passes P2P Reform Bill

WASHINGTON – The House of Representatives today placed greater restrictions on the use of open network peer-to-peer (P2P) software on all Federal computers after passing H.R. 4098, the "Secure Federal File Sharing Act."   The bill, passed by a vote of 408 to 13, will enhance national security by protecting sensitive government data.

"We can no longer ignore the threat to sensitive government information, businesses and consumers that insecure peer-to-peer networks pose," said Chairman Towns. "Securing federal computer files is critical to our national security. Congress acted today to protect the American people by helping to prevent inadvertent security breaches on insecure networks."

Chairman Edolphus "Ed" Towns (D-NY) and the Committee have been examining the dangers of P2P software for almost a decade. H.R. 4098 makes important progress toward banning the recreational use of P2P software on all federal computers, computer systems and networks including those belonging to government contractors. The bill would also require the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to approve legitimate uses of P2P software on a case-by-case basis and provide to Congress annually a list of agencies that are using P2P software and the intended purposes for using the software. On March 4, 2010, the Oversight Committee passed H.R. 4098 and sent it to the House floor for a final vote.

Currently, P2P software and open networks can pose major security and privacy risks on computers other than when used legally to share files that are not copyrighted. Last year, Chairman Towns reopened the Committee's investigation, and during a hearing on the issue, experts provided testimony about the risks associated with P2P file sharing on open networks. On March 4, 2010, the "Secure Federal File Sharing Act" passed the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

In 2009, several security breaches involving highly sensitive information were discovered and in some cases widely reported by the news media. The leaks included a list of [ongoing House Ethics Committee investigations](#)
, the wiring schematics for the "Marine One" helicopter that were downloaded in Iran, and the release of sensitive information about U.S. military programs and troops.

"While I understand that peer-to-peer file sharing software offers great potential, the security risks of open network use on Federal computers and systems far exceed that potential," said Chairman Towns. "Because of our actions today, important safeguards are now in place to protect sensitive government information."

H.R. 4098 now moves to the United States Senate for consideration.

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