

Joint Education/Library/Scientific Associations' Letter to The Honorable Neil Abercrombie

Letter to all Members of the House of Representatives

October 8, 1999

The Honorable Neil Abercrombie
1502 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Abercrombie:

On behalf of the undersigned education, library, and scientific associations representing thousands of educational institutions, libraries, and scientists throughout the United States, we are writing to express our strong support for H.R. 1858, the Consumer and Investor Access to Information Act of 1999. Many of our organizations have been actively involved in the legislative debates regarding database legislation for well over three years. We support H.R. 1858 because it protects databases against commercial piracy while preserving the critically important role that information plays in the progress of science and education. We oppose H.R. 354, the Collections of Information Antipiracy Act, because it provides overly broad protection for "collections of information" that would reduce the public's access to information and would impose unreasonable and costly burdens on scientific research, scholarship, and education.

Data and information form the foundation of scientific and scholarly research and teaching. Preserving the ability of colleges and universities, libraries, their faculties and students to produce, analyze, integrate, and disseminate data is essential to sustaining the productivity of our nation's system of academic research and education, as well as preserving our cultural and scientific heritage. This research and education system has played a key role in U.S. leadership in science and technology. U.S. higher education is one of our most robust industries, drawing millions of students worldwide.

For over 200 years, the information policy of this country has protected creativity, not factual information. This policy has served us extremely well, allowing libraries and educational and research institutions and their constituencies to flourish. Provisions in H.R. 1858 would continue this tradition by permitting the unfettered use of facts?nformation which is, and should remain, in the public domain, while affording additional protections to the compilations of facts that constitute databases.

In contrast, H.R. 354, the Collections of Information Antipiracy Act, would, for the first time, protect facts and would allow a producer or publisher unprecedented control over uses of information including downstream, transformative use of facts and government-produced data contained in a database.

We ask you to consider carefully the significant impacts that legislation in this arena can have on our research and education system and to support the more narrowly tailored approach taken in H.R. 1858. We look forward to working with you on legislation that provides appropriate protection for databases while preserving essential access to the data in those databases.

Sincerely,

Nils Hasselmo
President

On behalf of:

American Association for the Advancement of Science
American Association of Law Libraries
American Council on Education
American Library Association
Association of American Universities
Association of Research Libraries
Council on Governmental Relations
Council of Graduate Schools
EDUCAUSE
Medical Library Association
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges
Special Libraries Association

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