



October 25, 2011

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the National Consumers League,¹ the nation's oldest consumer organization, I write to urge Congress to act carefully, yet expeditiously, to protect consumers and workers from international criminals who operate "rogue" websites.

Rogue websites harm consumers. Sometimes the harm is blatant, such as sites peddling counterfeit pharmaceuticals that can injure or even kill consumers.² Other times the harms are subtler, as sites purporting to sell discount clothing, footwear, or other consumer goods pass off low-quality, counterfeit items as legitimate. Even consumers who know the goods they are buying are counterfeit may not know that the sites are often run by criminal enterprises, and that they may be putting themselves at risk of computer malware, as well as credit card fraud and identity theft.³

Consumers are not the only ones hurt by rogue websites. These sites also harm U.S. workers, whose creations – be they manufactured goods or digital movies, music, software or games – are stolen, and the revenues that should have been used to pay higher wages or create more jobs are instead diverted to enlarge the coffers of criminal enterprises.

We applaud the leaders in both the House and Senate who are seeking to address the problem of rogue sites. While there is not unanimity on which specific tools are best-suited to address this issue, there is broad support for enhancing the ability to impact criminal enterprises located overseas and to cut off their commercial lifelines.

We urge you to consider carefully the concerns of affected parties, and craft a bill that is effective in protecting consumers and workers from malicious websites while avoiding to the greatest extent possible any unintended consequences that could negatively impact consumer rights or innovation on the Internet.

As an organization that sees the impact of fraud at the ground level, we know all too well the harm inflicted on consumers by rogue sites. We believe that a carefully drafted bill could provide powerful and effective tools to mitigate the consumer harm caused by rogue sites.

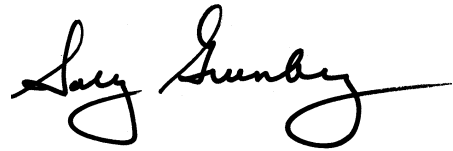
¹ The National Consumers League, founded in 1899, is America's pioneer consumer organization. Our non-profit mission is to protect and promote social and economic justice for consumers and workers in the United States and abroad. For more information, visit www.nclnet.org.

² Examples are collected at www.fightonlinetheft.com.

³ See, e.g., www.mcafee.com/us/about/news/2010/q3/20100914-01.aspx.

The National Consumers League stands ready to be a partner in this effort to protect consumers from fraud. Should you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sally Greenberg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sally Greenberg
Executive Director
National Consumers League