

WASHINGTON, DC— Congressman Mel Watt (12th District of North Carolina) made the following statement regarding his co-sponsorship of the Stop Online Piracy Act (HR 3261):

“Earlier today, I agreed to sign on as a co-sponsor of the Stop Online Piracy Act (HR 3261) that was introduced by a number of my colleagues yesterday. H.R. 3261 represents a good-faith effort following months of negotiations between multiple stakeholders and staff of members of Congress, including my staff, to craft a legislative solution to the problem of online theft of intellectual property which has reached crisis proportions.

“A number of stakeholders who had participated in the staff level negotiations and members of the press have asked why I, as the Ranking Member of the Intellectual Property Subcommittee, was not an original co-sponsor of H.R. 3261 when it was introduced yesterday. As Ranking Member, it is incumbent upon me to fully understand the implications of legislation that falls within my subcommittee’s jurisdiction. At the time the bill was introduced, I was more than half way through the intensive, personal review I routinely give all bills I co-sponsor, when I learned that the bill would be introduced imminently. As there were a number of last minute changes to the text of the bill—which was not provided in its entirety until less than 48 hours prior to introduction—I simply had not completed my review and was not prepared to join my colleagues as an original co-sponsor.

“Solving the problem of online piracy and counterfeiting is a serious challenge which will require ongoing dialogue and consideration of a number of issues. The bill is a good start that will help focus that dialogue and consideration. I encourage all stakeholders to continue to provide their input and advice as we attempt to develop a final product expeditiously.”

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