

Earlier this week public interest groups pointed to a Media Matters for America study showing that most of the major networks — ABC, CBS, Fox News, MSNBC and NBC — have failed to cover opposition to the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA).

Online piracy is definitely a problem. But these bills would do little to solve it. They're the latest effort in Hollywood's Sisyphean quest to close the open Internet — and slow down the kinds of online innovation that threaten the old-school media masters.

The parent companies of these networks are used to getting what they want in Washington. Collectively these companies (CBS Corp., Comcast, Disney and News Corp.) have contributed a total of \$55,229,497 to political campaigns, and have spent more than \$250,000,000 — that's a quarter billion dollars — on lobbying government officials (look no further than the effect companies like Comcast had on the FCC's watered-down Net Neutrality rules to see what corporate cash can do to public policy).

Here's a breakdown by company (these and the above numbers come courtesy of the Sunlight Foundation's excellent Influence Explorer):

Company

Total campaign contributions

Total lobbyist spending

CBS Corp.

\$1,191,253

\$26,613,000

Comcast Corp.

\$24,823,283

\$81,457,323

Disney

\$21,064,987

\$57,581,991

News Corp.

\$8,149,974

\$61,239,000

These companies aren't flushing dollars down the toilet; they're investing in Washington with the expectation that, when bills they like come before their beneficiaries in Congress, the vote will go the "right" way. Cue SOPA and PIPA.

Regardless of their political leanings, these companies' news networks have a duty to report the news. Let's hold them accountable and urge them to end the SOPA blackout.