



May 2, 2011

Dear Member,

We are a coalition of consumer advocates and free market organizations, writing to express our concern about the Department of Justice's (DOJ) unlawful seizure of online poker websites. On April 15, a day now known as "Black Friday," the DOJ effectively shut down three of the largest online poker websites by seizing their domain names. This heavy-handed prosecution of the websites, all of which are based abroad, has made a mockery of America's stated commitment to Internet freedom and individual liberty. This incident underscores why Congress needs to repeal the Unlawful Internet Gambling and Enforcement Act (UIGEA), which the DOJ has been using since its passage in 2006 to unjustly prosecute online poker.

The DOJ's continued prosecution of online poker is a complete misuse of government power. The domain name seizures, prior to any trial, are a gross violation of property rights. These seizures have hindered the online gambling operations, not only for Americans who violate no laws by playing poker online, but also for residents of other nations where Internet poker is completely lawful and an integral part of their economy and where the U.S. government has no jurisdiction.

It is deeply troubling that the United States, a country that purports to value individual freedom, has so miserably failed to protect it when it comes to politically incorrect pursuits like online gambling. In effect, our government is bullying its own citizens and holding innocent foreign companies hostage.

Hopefully, the events of Black Friday will focus public attention on the flaws of civil asset forfeiture laws and encourage our leaders to officially decriminalize online poker. While the DOJ's actions may have temporarily put a halt to online poker, it cannot—and should not—seek to prohibit the activity in the long-term.

We respectfully ask members of Congress to do what they can to reign in the Department of Justice, put an end to its war of intimidation, and protect American citizens' individual rights and liberty by repealing the Unlawful Internet Gambling and Enforcement Act.

Sincerely,

Michelle Minton: Director of Insurance Studies, the Competitive Enterprise Institute

Grover Norquist: President, Americans for Tax Reform