

**Comments of Paul E. Almeida, President,
Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO,
at April 4, 2011 Press Conference on
Fighting Online Infringement**

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Thank you, Senator Leahy, for inviting my participation today and for your courageous leadership in fighting online infringement. Thank you also to each of the other Members of Congress who are here today for all you do to combat digital theft.

I am Paul Almeida, President of the Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO. The Department is a coalition of 23 national unions representing more than four million professional and technical people.

Among those unions are nine representing hundreds of thousands of creative professionals and other workers in the arts, entertainment, and media industries. Their members include actors, stage employees and technicians, musicians, writers, editors, and many others.

My message is simple. For these skilled professionals, online infringement is wage theft.

In these unique industries, many hard-working professionals depend on residuals and royalties for much of their incomes. Backend payments from repeated showings of films and television shows, and royalties from recordings, keep them afloat between projects. Those payments also fund health insurance and pension programs.

Digital theft costs the arts, entertainment, and media industries billions of dollars and hundreds of thousands of jobs. Too few people who download entertainment illegally recognize, though, that they are stealing wages and benefits from workers.

That reality lends a special urgency to the work that each Member of Congress here today has undertaken. The nine arts, entertainment, and media unions that I have the honor to represent unanimously supported the Combatting Online Infringement and Counterfeits Act in the last Congress. They – and the hundreds of thousands of members whom they represent – look forward to its rapid passage in this Congress.

Thank you.

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The Department for Professional Employees, AFL-CIO (DPE), is a coalition of 23 national and international unions that represent professional and technical people. Together the unions affiliated with DPE represent over four million people in more than 300 occupations. Among them are professionals in the arts, entertainment, and media; engineering, science, and information technology; education and information resources; health care; and public administration. DPE is the largest association of professional and technical workers in the United States.