

US Congress attacks freedom of speech on USENET, web

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- *From:* "sinister" <sinister@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>
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http://news.com.com/2010-1028_3-6022491.html

First few paragraphs:

"Annoying someone via the Internet is now a federal crime.

"It's no joke. Last Thursday, President Bush signed into law a prohibition on posting annoying Web messages or sending annoying e-mail messages without disclosing your true identity.

"In other words, it's OK to flame someone on a mailing list or in a blog as long as you do it under your real name. Thank Congress for small favors, I guess.

"This ridiculous prohibition, which would likely imperil much of Usenet, is buried in the so-called Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act. Criminal penalties include stiff fines and two years in prison.

"The use of the word 'annoy' is particularly problematic,' says Marv Johnson, legislative counsel for the American Civil Liberties Union. 'What's annoying to one person may not be annoying to someone else.'

"Buried deep in the new law is Sec. 113, an innocuously titled bit called 'Preventing Cyberstalking.' It rewrites existing telephone harassment law to prohibit anyone from using the Internet 'without disclosing his identity and with intent to annoy.' "

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◇ *From:* Barky Bark

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