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Contributor's Brief

"Any society that would give up a little liberty to gain a little security will deserve neither and lose both."

Rick Falkvinge is the founder of the Swedish Pirate Party and the international politicized pirate movement. His leadership took the Pirate Party into the top ten parties in the last Swedish election, without a dime in the campaign chest, on the issue of defending our civil liberties against copyright aggression.



Welcome

Welcome to this brief about contributing to the Pirate Party.

We've come a long way since we started with a bang in January of 2006. We came out of nowhere and made it into the top ten list in the parliamentary results – a record for a party founded in the election year. In addition, we didn't have a dime in the campaign chest. Everything we did, we did with lots and lots of volunteers who believe that what we do is important.

Our message was and is clear: there is a conflict between today's copyright regime and the right to basic privacy. Before, when the copyright monopoly was purely commercial, it was easy to spot infringements: you could see a copied book for sale, or an unauthorized concert.

Today, however, the copyright monopoly has crept into our private communications. It is now illegal for me to send some things in a private e-mail, such as music or video clips.

If copyright is to be enforced in this new domain, every piece of private communication must be monitored for infractions. The postal secret must be broken, and every e-mail, every chat, every one and zero examined by law enforcement and corporate copyright enforcers. Including the communication to our lawyers and doctors.

Copyright is no longer a discussion regarding economic principles. It is a fight for basic human rights to privacy.

Today's new technology allows us to create a police state beyond nightmares, or to create a society where everybody has 24-by-7 access to all of humanity's collective knowledge and culture. We prefer the latter. It would be a much larger leap ahead than when schools and public libraries arrived. Possibly even larger than the printing press.

Unfortunately, today's politicians do not understand the conflict between privacy and the copyright monopoly. But the entertainment industry does, and is constantly lobbying for more and more erosion of privacy to maintain its old crumbling monopolies.

That's why we're taking this to the next level. We've had our first successes. We have temporarily influenced some parties in Sweden and nearby. We have founded a rapidly growing youth section, and we're now raising funds for the election campaigns of 2009 and 2010. We're aiming to raise ten million dollars to cover both elections – the first election is European, the second is national.

Oh, and for the record – political donations are not regulated in Sweden. American citizens, just like any other citizen in the world, are perfectly free to donate. Anonymously, if you wish. However, we are not registered as an American charity so the contribution is probably not tax deductible. Your local laws may vary.

Welcome onwards to read more.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rick Falkvinge". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Rick Falkvinge
Party Leader, Swedish Pirate Party

Why Sweden?



Sweden is a frozen country the size of a shoebox somewhere around the Arctic Circle. Why would anyone care about what's happening there, seriously?

Well, it's a perfect place to trigger a global reform.

Global intellectual property reform can theoretically come from any of the three major economic powers: United States, Europe, and China. These three are equally strong in terms of global production.

China is unlikely to rock the boat at this time. The United States has a very strong pro-copyright lobby deeply integrated with its Chamber of Commerce. Therefore, we believe that global intellectual property reform is most likely to succeed when initiated from Europe.

Some people believe that copyright reform can originate from inside the U.S., if the issue would just catch the attention of some politicians. If the politicians would just notice that it is a significant issue. Unfortunately, we believe that day is far off. Here's a comparison:

In Sweden, file sharing news make first page headline stories. Pitch black headlines in the top daily mainstream newspapers. Any court case, any law proposal, even foreign court cases make news. They're debated endlessly in the newspaper columns, in morning TV

sofas and on blogs. And yet, despite these obvious cues that the issue is of public interest, the politicians continued to be adamantly ignorant. At least, they did until the day someone threatened to take their votes, and maybe their job, over this topic.

In the U.S., there are hardly any mainstream news about file sharing for the politicians to ignore. So any real political debate is not going to come from within the United States, not any time soon.

Intellectual property only has value because everybody agrees it has. There is no intrinsic value, like there is in food or building materials. The first entity to break this agreement and say that copyright does not represent the agreed value is going to set off a cascade of chain reactions. It's like stating that the emperor has no clothes.

We believe that Sweden, as part of Europe, is uniquely positioned to be the entity that breaks the spell.

First, the debate climate in Sweden is unmatched. The Pirate Bay is known worldwide. Sweden also has an active pirate NGO, the Pirate Bureau, and a political party, us. Both are frequently seen on national news.

Second, the natural reaction from the US copyright lobby would be to apply trade sanctions to a country rocking the boat. This cannot be done with Sweden,

as the country is part of the European Union – and the EU is economically as strong as the United States. Both have a GDP of twelve trillion dollars. This is important, as it means that the copyright lobby in the US cannot threaten trade sanctions without getting equally hurt.

Third, Sweden's technological culture and understanding has been changed by mainstream broadband penetration to a degree that's matched only by Japan. It is common for households to have a 100-megabit full duplex connection. Broadband prices are among the cheapest in the world. Technology has always changed society, and Sweden is ahead on the bell curve of this particular change.

As a result of all this, Sweden has come to be a major center of global copyright criticism and copyright resistance. While old-school politicians still listen to the copyright lobby, most of the young voters support file sharing and copyright reform – as much as 90% among first-time voters. The nation is close to the tipping point, a tipping point with global implications.

The Pirate Party is there to make the push to set the stone rolling.

Our Platform



The Pirate Party's platform is not a full platform. Our mission is to change the global laws to facilitate the industrial society's transformation into a networked information society. Nothing more, nothing less.

We do this by working towards a transparent government, strengthened privacy for the citizens, and reformed intellectual property laws.

This narrow platform is not a weakness. Rather, it is key to our influence. We aim to hold the balance of power in Swedish parliament – to hold 4 % in between the two competing party groups with 48 % each. This would let us determine the next Prime Minister, and the price of that office would be an intellectual property reform and strengthened privacy. In return, we vote with the administration on everything else, such as energy policy, road tax, et cetera.

We need 4 % of the votes in Sweden to trigger a global avalanche.

Our policy on copyright, which is the primary focus of this brief, can be summed up in four points:

- **Copyright is commercial:** The copyright monopoly must only cover commercial activities. Any noncom-

mercial collection, use, derivation or distribution of culture and knowledge shall be explicitly encouraged. This means that file sharing and sampling are both set free.

- **Reduced copyright term:** The now commercial copyright monopoly must be drastically shortened, it is indefensible as is. No investors calculate their investments on a 100+ year lifespan of a book or movie. We suggest five years from the time of publication.
- **Ban on DRM technologies:** Digital Restrictions Management is effectively corporations writing and arbitrarily enforcing their own copyright laws. We have a parliament to write such laws, thank you very much.
- **Elimination of blank media tax:** To top it off, blank media is taxed in Sweden, and the taxes go to the record industry. This tax is indefensible.

Apart from copyright reform, we are also calling for the complete abolition of the patent system, including software patents, and severely strengthened privacy safeguards. More information about these policies can be found on our web site.

Why Ten Million Dollars?



The Pirate Party has had remarkable successes on a shoestring budget, with volunteers contributing their time, energy and money. So what's the deal about raising a campaign budget?

One thing you learn very quickly when running a political campaign is that everything costs money. Last time around, we were able to make do with asking our volunteers to pay for the materials out of their own pockets. Taking it to the next level, we want to provide our volunteers with service centers, where they can pick up flyers, folders and other material. It sounds obvious, but we didn't have that last time around.

For example, we need to print and distribute ballots for the party. About twenty million of them. Just to name one expense.

Another thing you learn very quickly is that key people in the organization need to work full-time with the party. It's simply not possible to do this alongside an ordinary day job.

So why ten million? Well, that's the campaign budget for the established parties in Sweden – for *one* election.

We believe we can do better. We can run two campaigns on that sum – the European Parliament campaign of 2009, and the national parliament campaign of 2010. And after those elections, we should have produced voting results good enough to get further funding from the state of Sweden.

This means that the ten million dollars is kickstart capital, after which the Pirate Party should have a positive cash flow on its own.

So does falling just short of the ten-million target mean that we can't run in the next elections? No, of course it doesn't. We're leaner, smarter, and more efficient than the established parties. We're not dependent on advertising, like they are; we use word of mouth. Ten times harder, but also ten times more efficient once you master it. The ten million dollars we're raising is a ballpark figure that would enable us to service our volunteers nationwide to take the pirate movement to the next level.

That level is parliament.