PARIS - French lawmakers gave final approval Friday to legislation that could force Apple Computer Inc. to make its iPod and iTunes Music Store compatible with rivals' music players and online services.

Both the Senate and the National Assembly, France's lower house, voted in favor of the copyright bill, which some analysts said could cause Apple Computer Inc. and others to pull their music players and online download stores from France.

The vote was the final legislative step before the bill becomes law — barring the success of a last-ditch constitutional challenge filed last week by the opposition Socialists.

Currently, songs bought on iTunes can be played only on iPods, and an iPod can't play downloads from other stores that rival the extensive iTunes music catalog from major artists and labels — like Sony's Connect and Napster.

Apple described the original version of the copyright bill as "state-sponsored piracy" earlier this year, but a company spokesman was not immediately available to comment on Friday's vote.

In a statement issued after lawmakers hashed out the final compromise text last week, Apple said it hoped the market would be left to decide "which music players and online music stores are offered to consumers."

The final compromise asserts that companies should share the required technical data with any rival that wants to offer compatible music players and online stores, but it toned down many of the tougher measures backed by lower-house lawmakers early on.

It also maintained a loophole introduced by senators, which could allow Cupertino, Calif.-based Apple and others to dodge the data-sharing demands by striking new deals with record labels and artists.
French lawmakers approve 'iTunes law' - Yahoo! News