

February 24, 2014

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you on the occasion of the two-year anniversary of the publication of the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights, a comprehensive framework for privacy protection. As you explained in the introduction to the proposal, “Americans have always cherished our privacy. From the birth of our republic, we assured ourselves protection against unlawful intrusion into our homes and our personal papers.”

Never has the need to update the privacy laws of the United States been more urgent. Americans today worry about retailers who lose their credit card information, intelligence agencies that gather their phone records, and data brokers that sell their family’s medical information to strangers. Industry “self-regulation” has failed and opt-out techniques force consumers to check their privacy settings every time a company changes its business model.

The Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights is a sensible framework that would help establish fairness and accountability for the collection and use of personal information. The Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights is based on familiar principles for privacy protection that are found in many laws in the United States. The Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights would establish baseline safeguards for the development of innovative services that take advantage of technology while safeguarding privacy.

But the key to progress is the enactment by Congress of this important privacy framework. Only enforceable privacy protections create meaningful safeguards. As you explained two years ago, “Privacy protections are critical to maintaining consumer trust in networked technologies.” That is even more true today. Concerns about consumer trust in networked technologies are now global concerns, and the failure of the United States to update its privacy laws has implications for Internet users around the world.

We urge you to work with those in Congress who favor the privacy rights of Americans, who support updates to privacy law, and who understand why this issue is so critical to so many Americans. And let those who stand in the way explain to their constituents why they believe that it is not necessary for Congress to do anything further to protect the fundamental rights of Americans.

Two years ago, you wrote that the “Administration has called for Congress to pass legislation that applies the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights to commercial sectors that are not subject to existing Federal data privacy laws.” That is precisely what should happen now.

On behalf of all Americans, we urge you now propose legislation to enact the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights into law.

Respectfully,

Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
American Civil Liberties Union
American Library Association
Association of Research Libraries
Berkeley Media Studies Group
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Campaign for Commercial-Free Childhood
Center for Digital Democracy
Center for Media Justice
Children Now
Color of Change
Common Sense Media
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Watchdog
Consumers Union
Defending Dissent Foundation
Demand Progress
Doctor Patient Medical Association
Electronic Frontier Foundation
Electronic Privacy Information Center
Free Press
Government Accountability Project
Knowledge Ecology International
Media Alliance
Media Literacy Project
NAACP
National Association of Consumer Advocates
National Lawyers Guild
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Workrights Institute
Patient Privacy Rights
Pediatrics Now
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse
Privacy Times

Public Citizen, Inc.
Public Health Advocacy Institute
Public Health Institute
Public Knowledge
U.S. Public Interest Research Group
Virginia Citizens Consumer Council

REFERENCES

The White House, “Consumer Data Privacy In A Networked World: A Framework for Protecting Privacy and Promoting Innovation in the Global Digital Economy” (February 2012)¹

“I am pleased to present this new Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights as a blueprint for privacy in the information age. . . . My Administration will work to advance these principles and work with Congress to put them into law.” President Barack Obama

The White House, “Fact Sheet: Plan to Protect Privacy in the Internet Age by Adopting a Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights” (Feb. 23, 2012)²

“As a world leader in the Internet marketplace, the Administration believes the United States has a special responsibility to develop privacy practices that meet global standards and establish effective online consumer protection.”

The White House, “We Can’t Wait: Obama Administration Unveils Blueprint for a “Privacy Bill of Rights” to Protect Consumers Online” (Feb. 23, 2012)³

“American consumers can’t wait any longer for clear rules of the road that ensure their personal information is safe online,” said **President Obama**. “As the Internet evolves, consumer trust is essential for the continued growth of the digital economy. That’s why an online privacy Bill of Rights is so important. For businesses to succeed online, consumers must feel secure. By following this blueprint, companies, consumer advocates and policymakers can help protect consumers and ensure the Internet remains a platform for innovation and economic growth.”

¹ Available at www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/privacy-final.pdf

² Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/02/23/fact-sheet-plan-protect-privacy-internet-age-adopting-consumer-privacy-b>

³ Available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/02/23/we-can-t-wait-obama-administration-unveils-blueprint-privacy-bill-rights>