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## 34 Civil Rights, Consumer, and Privacy Organizations Unite to Release Principles for Privacy Legislation

Washington, DC ----- Today, 34 civil rights, consumer, and privacy organizations join in releasing [public interest principles for privacy legislation](#), because the public needs and deserves strong and comprehensive federal legislation to protect their privacy and afford meaningful redress.

Irresponsible data practices lead to a broad range of harms, including discrimination in employment, housing, healthcare, and advertising. They also lead to data breaches and loss of individuals' control over personal information. Existing enforcement mechanisms fail to hold data processors accountable and provide little-to-no relief for privacy violations.

The privacy principles outline four concepts that any meaningful data protection legislation should incorporate at a minimum:

- Privacy protections must be strong, meaningful, and comprehensive.
- Data practices must protect civil rights, prevent unlawful discrimination, and advance equal opportunity.
- Governments at all levels should play a role in protecting and enforcing privacy rights.
- Legislation should provide redress for privacy violations.

These public interest privacy principles include a framework providing guidelines for policymakers considering how to protect the privacy of all Americans effectively while also offering meaningful redress. They follow three days of [Federal Trade Commission hearings](#) about big data, competition, and privacy as well as the comment deadline on "[Developing the Administration's Approach to Privacy](#)," a request for comment from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration as the agency works to develop privacy policy recommendations for the Trump Administration, and [ongoing work](#) at the National Institute for Standards and Technology to develop a privacy risk framework.

The groups urge members of Congress to pass privacy legislation that ensures fairness, prevents discrimination, advances equal opportunity, protects free expression, and facilitates trust between the public and companies that collect their personal data.

New America's Open Technology Institute, Public Knowledge, Access Humboldt, Access Now, Berkeley Media Studies Group, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood, Center for Democracy & Technology, Center for Digital Democracy, Center for Media Justice, Center on Privacy & Technology at Georgetown Law, Color of Change, Common Cause, Common Sense Kids Action, Consumer Action, Consumer Federation of America, Consumers Union, Customer

Commons, Demand Progress, Free Press Action Fund, Human Rights Watch, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Media Alliance, Media Mobilizing Project, National Association of Consumer Advocates, National Consumer Law Center, National Consumers League, National Digital Inclusion Alliance, National Hispanic Media Coalition, Oakland Privacy, Open MIC (Open Media and Information Companies Initiative), Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, Public Citizen, U.S. PIRG, and United Church of Christ, OC Inc. signed the principles. Additional local and national privacy advocates are encouraged to sign on.

**The following can be attributed to Eric Null, Senior Policy Counsel at New America's Open Technology Institute:**

"For decades, privacy regulation has favored the company over the user -- companies set their own rules and users are left to fend for themselves. Worse, companies have even discriminated based on protected classes through algorithmic decision-making. Comprehensive privacy legislation must disrupt this status quo. Legislation that follows the public interest privacy principles will better protect users and give users more control over their data."

**The following can be attributed to Allie Bohm, Policy Counsel at Public Knowledge:**

"It is imperative that any comprehensive privacy legislation reflect the concerns, interests, and priorities of actual human beings. Today, consumer protection, privacy, and civil rights groups come together to articulate those interests, priorities, and concerns. Importantly, these principles address the many harms people can experience from privacy violations and misuse of personal data, including enabling unfair price discrimination; limiting awareness of opportunities; and contributing to employment, housing, health care, and other forms of discrimination."

**The following can be attributed to Amie Stepanovich, U.S. Policy Manager at Access Now:**

"From Europe to India to Brazil, data privacy legislation is becoming the norm around the world, and people in the United States are getting left behind. It is long past time that our legislators acted to protect people across the country from opaque data practices that can result in its misuse and abuse, and any acceptable package must start with these principles."

**The following can be attributed to Josh Golin, Executive Director at Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood:**

"What big tech offers for 'free' actually comes at a high cost -- our privacy. Worst of all is how vulnerable kids are tracked online and then targeted with manipulative marketing. This has to stop. We need laws that will empower parents to protect their children's privacy."

**The following can be attributed to Joseph Jerome, Policy Counsel at Center for Democracy & Technology:**

“Debates about national privacy laws focus on how companies should implement Fair Information Practices. The operative word is ‘fair.’ When it comes to how companies collect, use, and share our data, too many business practices are simply unfair. Federal law must go beyond giving consumers more notices and choices about their privacy, and we think it is time for legislators in Congress to flip the privacy presumption and declare some data practices unfair.”

**The following can be attributed to Katharina Kopp, Director of Policy at Center for Digital Democracy:**

“To this day, U.S. citizens have had to live without effective privacy safeguards. Commercial data practices have grown ever more intrusive, ubiquitous and harmful. It is high time to provide Americans with effective safeguards against commercial surveillance. Any legislation must not only effectively protect individual privacy, it must advance equitable, just and fair data uses, and must protect the most vulnerable among us, including children. In other words, they must bring about real changes in corporate practices. We have waited long enough; the time is now.”

**The following can be attributed to Laura Moy, Executive Director at Center on Privacy & Technology at Georgetown Law:**

“Americans want their data to be respected, protected, and used in ways that are consistent with their expectations. Any new legislation governing commercial data practices must advance these goals, and also protect us from data-driven activities that are harmful to society. We need privacy to protect us from uses of data that exclude communities from important opportunities, enable faceless brokers to secretly build ever-more-detailed profiles of us, and amplify political polarization and hate speech.”

**The following can be attributed to Yosef Getachew, Director of Media and Democracy Program at Common Cause:**

“An overwhelming majority of Americans believe they have lost control over how their personal information is collected and used across the internet ecosystem. Numerous data breaches and abuses in data sharing practices, which have jeopardized the personal information of millions of Americans, have validated these fears. Our current privacy framework no longer works, and the lack of meaningful privacy protections poses a serious threat to our democracy. Companies can easily manipulate data to politically influence voters or engage in discriminatory practices. These principles should serve as a baseline for any comprehensive privacy legislation that guarantees all Americans control over their data.”

**The following can be attributed to James P. Steyer, CEO and Founder, at Common Sense:**

“Any federal legislation should provide for strong baseline protections, particularly for the most surveilled and vulnerable generation ever -- our kids. These principles reflect that as privacy,

consumer, and civil rights advocates, we only want federal legislation that will move the ball forward in terms of protecting kids, families, and all of us.”

**The following can be attributed to Linda Sherry, director of national priorities at Consumer Action:**

“Our country has floundered far too long without strong federal regulations governing data collection, retention, use and sharing. These privacy principles, developed by a coalition of leading consumer, civil rights and privacy organizations, are offered as a framework to guide Congress in protecting consumers from the many harms that can befall them when they are given little or no choice in safeguarding their data, and companies have few, if any, restrictions on how they use that information.”

**The following can be attributed to Susan Grant, Director of Consumer Protection and Privacy at Consumer Federation of America:**

“We need to move forward on data protection in the United States, from a default that allows companies to do what they want with Americans’ personal information as long as they don’t lie about it, to one in which their business practices are aligned with respect for privacy rights and the responsibility to keep people’s data secure.”

**The following can be attributed to Katie McInnis, Policy Counsel for Consumers Union, the advocacy division of Consumer Reports:**

“As new data breaches are announced at an alarming rate, now is the time to protect consumers with strong privacy laws. We need laws that do more than just address broad transparency and access rights. Consumers deserve practical controls and robust enforcement to ensure all of their personal information is sufficiently protected.”

**The following can be attributed to Gaurav Laroia, Policy Counsel at Free Press Action Fund:**

“The public has lost faith in technology companies’ interest and ability to police their own privacy and data usage practices. It’s past time for Congress to pass a strong law that empowers people to make meaningful choices about their data, protects them from discrimination and undue manipulation, and holds companies accountable for those practices.”

**The following can be attributed to David Brody, Counsel & Senior Fellow for Privacy and Technology at the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law:**

“Protecting the right to privacy is essential to protecting civil rights and advancing racial equity in a modern, Internet-focused society. Privacy rights are civil rights. Invasive profiling of online activity enables discrimination in employment, housing, credit, and education; helps bad actors target voter suppression and misinformation; assists biased law enforcement surveillance; chills

the free association of advocates; and creates connections between hateful extremists exacerbating racial tensions.”

**The following can be attributed to Tracy Rosenberg, Executive Director at Media Alliance:**

“After a flood of data breaches and privacy violations, Americans overwhelmingly support meaningful protections for their personal information that are not written by, for and in the interests of the data collection industry. These principles start to define what that looks like.”

**The following can be attributed to Francella Ochillo, Vice President of Policy & General Counsel at National Hispanic Media Coalition:**

“For years, tech platforms have been allowed to monetize personal data without oversight or consequence, losing sight of the fact that personal data belongs to the user. Meanwhile, Latinos and other marginalized communities continue to be exposed to the greatest risk of harm and have the fewest opportunities for redress. The National Hispanic Media Coalition joins the chorus of advocates calling for a comprehensive regulatory framework that protects a user’s right to privacy and access as well as the right to be forgotten.”

**The following can be attributed to JP Massar, Organizer at Oakland Privacy:**

“We must not only watch the watchers, and regulate the sellers of our information. We must begin to unravel the information panopticon that has already formed. This is a start.”

**The following can be attributed to Robert Weissman, President at Public Citizen:**

“Internet privacy means control. Either we get to control our own lives as lived through the Internet, or the Big Tech companies do. That’s what is at stake in whether the U.S. adopts real privacy protections.”

**The following can be attributed to Ed Mierzwinski, Senior Director for Consumer Programs at U.S. PIRG:**

“The big banks and the big tech companies all say that they want a federal privacy law, but the law that their phalanx of lobbyists seeks isn’t designed to protect consumers. Instead, it’s designed to protect their business models that treat consumers as commodities for sale; it fails to guarantee that their secret sauce big data algorithms don’t discriminate; it eliminates stronger and innovative state laws forever and it denies consumers any real, enforceable rights when harmed. We can’t allow that.”

You may view the [privacy principles](#) for more information.