



March 7, 2019

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Statement for the record of the February 27, 2019 hearing on *Policy Principles for a Federal Data Privacy Framework in the United States*.

Dear Senators Wicker and Cantwell,

On behalf of the IEEE-USA, representing nearly 180,000 technology professionals across the United States, we are pleased to see that Congress is exploring the necessary steps to address risks to consumers and taking action to provide Americans with strong, 21st century, data privacy rights. Every American has the right to own his or her personal data and control its use.

IEEE members are the men and women who create the technology that defines our society. We built the internet, cell phones, satellites, power stations, and other innovations that allow our modern society to function and thrive. As such, IEEE has a unique perspective on the benefits of these technologies – and the risks. We are increasingly concerned about Americans' rapidly eroding privacy. Corporations methodically collect reams of data on most Americans with little oversight or limits. Few Americans realize just how encompassing and potentially powerful this data is, or how much companies are able to do with it. We believe this needs to change, and change quickly.

Technology allows the accumulation of every digital “touch,” by every individual, everywhere. Even data collected without a specific known identity can be associated with the individual over time. Aggregation of data from social media, credit card use, voter records, and other sources leads to detailed profiles for each individual. Analytics and artificial intelligence infer undisclosed or even unacknowledged traits and preferences. This information can be combined to target individuals with maximally persuasive ads, content, or propaganda to influence actions and alter beliefs. In short, Americans are hemorrhaging personal data, which is then used to maximize profits, addict consumers, and alter the future of our democracy.

The critical policy response is to implement effective privacy protections and disclosures to reduce the unconstrained collection of personal information and help individuals identify the uses and misuses of this data. Such protections require substantial penalties, including felony imprisonment and significant fines, to serve as effective deterrents to privacy violations.

Congress should establish corporate responsibility for the collection, storage, and use of personal data, thus setting a federal privacy standard that recognizes every American's clear legal rights to his or her personal data. Clearly established privacy protections provide a stable operating environment between companies, consumers and other users of personal data. This is the foundation for the essential trust needed for future online economic growth, while still offering benefits to the public.

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Individuals deserve the enforceable right to remain anonymous when on-line, to live their lives without being monitored or tracked, to know what information companies are collecting, and to opt out of tracking. Further, American citizens deserve the right to assert ownership of their data, including the right to have it corrected or deleted as they see fit.

Legislation and regulation must address the following:

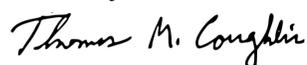
1. Transparency
 - a. Individuals must provide informed consent to the collection of their personal information, including disclosure of all other parties privy to that data, the information collected, aggregated and inferred from this data, and uses of that data.
 - b. Individuals must be informed when presented with personalized content of the source and sponsor of such content, and the data profile elements used to select them.

2. Control
 - a. Individuals deserve the right to know that any data they voluntarily agree to give to companies is protected, and they must have access to all personal information retained via direct relationships, as well as from aggregators of public and private data collection entities; including uses by these corporations and their customers of this data.
 - b. Individuals must have the ability to correct, transfer, and in most cases delete such data.

3. Security
 - a. Individuals must be notified when their data may have been compromised. When companies gather personal information, they assume responsibility for protecting that information, and should be subject to substantial legal consequences when they do not.

IEEE-USA is ready to help Congress tackle this difficult challenge, including providing legislators with neutral experts on modern technology. Erica Wissolik, Program Manager for Government Relations in our Washington Office, can be reached at e.wissolik@ieee.org or (202) 530-8347. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,



Thomas Coughlin
2019 IEEE-USA President