

Mark Bledsoe

August 10, 2018

Federal Trade Commission
Office of the Secretary
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Suite CC-5610 (Annex C)
Washington, DC 20580

Re: Competition and Consumer Protection in the 21st Century Hearing, Project Number P181201

As a consumer, it bothers me that everything I do online is being watched, and my personal information is being collected and sold without my permission. I do use Gmail, but I have very little social media and try to do as little as possible online because of these concerns. I am glad that the Federal Trade Commission is looking at taking steps to protect my data. I want online surveillance and abuse of personal information to stop!

Facebook, Google, Amazon and other online services justify taking our data because they are allowing us to use their service for free. But asking us to sign pages and pages of legal speak is not fair. In the past, I have actually read the Terms and Conditions some of these services ask users to agree to, so I can tell you that they are impossible to understand. The companies know that people just click "OK" in order to use the service and don't understand all that is hidden in the fine print. We need clearer disclosure about what information the app or service will use. Ideally, I would like to see a disclaimer similar to what is shown during a professional sporting event. It is stated very clearly - multiple times - that you cannot reproduce that broadcast under penalty of law. I want a similar "under no circumstances can this data be used for any purposes other than the original intent of the end user" blurb for online use. This would ensure that my data cannot be used for any reason unless they get my written permission each time. My information should not be treated as less important than a baseball game. When permission is granted, it shouldn't be a blanket permission forever. A company shouldn't be allowed to sell your data because 20 years ago, you clicked "OK" on a website. It makes no sense that broadcasters can put you in jail for stealing the recording, which is their information, yet they are making money off stealing and selling our information.

History teaches us that giving up too much control and allowing censorship puts us on a very dark path. Google's constant tracking is an issue that is eerily similar to the George Orwell novel, *1984*. Control the media, and you control the people. The dangerous trend of YouTube removing posts with certain political leanings must be stopped, and Equifax not protecting consumer data is just criminal. It is disgusting that they collect all this information on us, selling it to whomever they want and then, when there is a problem, they have the nerve to offer to sell us protection against themselves. It is just pure audacity!

We need FTC regulations to control how companies harvest our data and what they do with it. Control of that data needs to be returned to the people, and companies who abuse customer trust must be held accountable. At heart, I am a capitalist, and I do believe in people being able to protect what they have created and keep the rewards of that work. But again, I go back to the sports program example. If I can go to jail for stealing their "information," then certainly, my information deserves no less protection. Thank you for finally putting individual Americans ahead of corporations.

Sincerely,

Mark Bledsoe