

August 11, 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

Data is a very big commodity right now, and I don't want my personal data sold on the web if I can help it. I know how it feels, from personal experience, to lose control over your private information. My husband works for the government, and there was a hack of the government payroll department and his information was hacked. My name was on the account, too. Someone got their hands on my bank card numbers, and I had to get a new card. We were also part of the Equifax data breach. After it happened, we were given protection of our data for some years and a special PIN number for when we did our taxes but, ultimately, all of this data theft has really impacted our family.

As a result of these data breaches, I still worry. Somebody may have been out there just waiting, sitting on my information. They may decide to use it tomorrow to open up credit cards in my name without my knowledge. I just don't know. This is why it is so urgent for corporations like Google and Facebook to be absolutely more responsible in protecting my data. Basically, by profiting off of my personal data, they are selling *me*! I want them to put my data under lock and key, use it only within their own framework, and not sell it to anybody. These companies say that having my personal data for sale is a fair trade-off for using their sites for free. It's not really for free. They sell advertising; they shove advertising down our throats.

We are told that we have privacy rights, but more needs to be done by these online companies to protect them. The Federal Trade Commission is a great place to start. I am happy to see that consumers' concerns are being recognized and comments are being asked for from real people like me. Something needs to be done now. There are people out there who will steal our data and use it for nefarious purposes. I want to have more control over how my personal data is collected and how it is used.

I use Facebook and Google and all the big sites. When I signed up to use them or download apps, I did not always read all of the conditions before agreeing. There is always something in there that is complex and not easy to understand. When I click "I Accept" on a website, it does not mean that I am also consenting to give my data to them to use how they please. They need to be the ones protecting the data they receive from us. There should be a place where we can "opt out" from certain uses of our information. There should be a checklist where we can say, "You can use this and this and this, but not this or this or this."

Media giants know how hard it would be for us to not use the technology they provide. I don't think I could do without Google or Facebook in my everyday life. I have so many Gmail accounts I would have a hard time without Google. I use Facebook to keep in touch with family members that live far away. These monopolies that dominate the market are not working in the consumers' best interests. Some monopolies, like these, need to be broken up to provide more competition on the open market. Competition is the lifeblood of business. If you have to compete, then you innovate and create a better product. If you don't have competitors that are innovating, then you can just stagnate.

I like my privacy and I want it to be protected. I am not alone in my concerns with the ways my personal information is being used for the financial benefit of technology companies. You have the power to lessen the concerns of Americans by exercising some additional control over information sharing on the internet.

Sincerely,


Linda D. Bennett