

Shelley Ivey

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

The privacy of our personal medical information is guaranteed by the HIPAA laws. So why not have a similar law to cover our financial, demographic, and other digital information? As you are looking into consumer privacy, data protections, and the lack of competition for online media companies, keep HIPAA in mind. We want online surveillance and the abuse of our personal information to stop!

I use Facebook, Google Docs, Amazon, and eBay, and they all had multiples pages of legalese I had to consent to in order to use each site. Nobody reads all that, because nobody can understand it, and for them to claim that they now have the right to collect and sell my information is completely wrong. They are entitled to collect what they need for me to use their site, but my main concern is they do not need to know all my personal business. If they are making billions selling my information without my knowledge or permission, maybe they could share some of that profit with me! On a serious note though, I want more control over what information I give them and what they do with it.

A quick look at the news will show you the potential dangers of our personal online data not being protected. About four or five years ago, everyone in the state of South Carolina was notified that their social security number and tax information had been compromised. For all the trouble that caused, and can cause in the future, their restitution was a mere year of free credit monitoring. YouTube is undercutting the very basis of our democratic society, and not giving everyone a level playing field, by flagging or removing conservative posts. Google was caught doing the same thing by altering search results and paid a huge fine in Europe. The scandal that surfaced when Google was found to be tracking Android users, even when the feature was off and the SIM card was removed, makes me very uncomfortable.

Online companies can do better by their customers, but that will only happen with more competition and FTC oversight. Banks have improved, and normally if you file a police report, you are not held responsible. My husband and I once had our Discover card compromised, but they immediately sent texts and emails asking about potentially fraudulent charges, and they never held us liable. When my mom's bank card was stolen, she filed a police report and the bank didn't hold her liable. But you still feel violated. It is the same feelings I felt 30 years ago when my car was broken into.

These companies say that they are entitled to my data because I am not paying for using their platform. But their advertising is supposed to be supporting them, not selling my personal data. In many cases, consumers don't feel that they have a choice. My husband and I buy a lot from Amazon and I use Facebook to minister and to keep in touch with friends and family. Yes, I have definitely benefited from it, but that doesn't give them permission to steal and sell my personal information. I really do think a solution could be a HIPAA-type confidentiality agreement, along with a limit to what information I must give them to access their site. Thank you for working to protect consumers and hold these companies accountable.

Sincerely,

/ Shelley Ivey