



Vote 'NO!' to Government Regulation of Privacy at The Economist

From Jenn Cobb on Thursday, September 2, 2010 2:53 PM



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Currently, several members of Congress and the Federal Trade Commission are pursuing onerous regulations concerning government regulation of online privacy. [Two privacy bills](#) are up for consideration amidst [Senator Kerry's pledge](#) to regulate online privacy.

The Economist is currently hosting a live online debate over online privacy. Read as the debate unfolds [here](#). We encourage you to sign on and vote NO on government regulation of your privacy.

In the debate, Jim Harper from the Cato Institute makes an excellent argument against privacy control, referring to the "couch potato" for whom it seems easier to ask the government to take a problem off their hands than to become proactive themselves. However, the government mustn't be trusted with this task and Internet users are best off using the myriad of tools already available to protect themselves. Harper's opposition, Marc Rotenberg, is the one to note the threat that the government itself has posed in the past to our privacy (NSA's [Clipper Chip](#) and harmful and ineffective airport [body scanners](#)).

The government is too distanced from our needs, as evidenced by the '[Do Not Track List](#).' Tracking helps study preferences and cater to individual consumer needs. Harper states that more of a priority towards privacy would "undercut consumer welfare as indicated by the best evidence available: consumer behavior. People appear generally to prefer the interactivity and convenience of today's web, and the free content made more abundant by ad network tracking." It is precisely the free content that would be impacted by onerous federal privacy regulations.

Harper is correct in his assertion that the most efficient and cost-effective measure would be to get consumers educated and involved in their own privacy protection. We are our best protection. That's why you should join the debate and vote 'NO' at [economist.com](#).

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