

FCC Drafting Privacy Rules for Internet Service Providers

Key Aspects of Internet Privacy Rules Debate



Expansion of FCC Authority

Last year, the FCC expanded its authority to regulate Internet Service Providers (ISPs) as telecommunications carriers. The FCC will likely use this authority to write privacy rules that apply to ISPs, similar to the rules it has protecting phone customers' privacy.



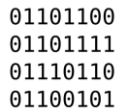
Tracking Technologies

As new tracking technologies allow more targeted advertising, consumer privacy advocates are asking for limits on the data that providers can track using technologies like "cookies". A controversy over a Verizon "supercookie" last year brought this issue to the FCC's attention.



Advocates Lobby for Strong Rules; Industry Warns of Irreparable Harm

An alliance of consumer groups and digital activists, including the ACLU, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Consumer Watchdog, sent a letter to the FCC urging the release of "strong" proposed rules as soon as possible. A petition by the American Cable Association and National Cable & Telecommunications Association warned that new legal burdens could cause "irreparable harm."



Data Access

Some privacy advocates worry that ISPs will gather information on consumers by inspecting the data sent through their networks. Increased use of encryption by consumers limits the amount of information ISPs can gather, but most traffic is not encrypted.



Consumer Protections

The Communications Act prohibits telecom companies from using certain customer network information for purposes other than providing service, called "customer proprietary network information" (CPNI). Privacy advocates want to expand this category of protected data to include location information sites visited, device information, and connection type.