



John Podesta, Senior Counselor to the President  
Nicole Wong, Deputy Chief Technology Officer, OSTP  
Big Data Study  
Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Eisenhower Executive Office Building  
1650 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC, 20502

March 31, 2014

Via Email

Dear Mr. Podesta and Ms. Wong,

Consumer Watchdog, a nonpartisan, nonprofit public interest group, thanks you for the opportunity to offer comments on the White House “Big Data” policy review. On one hand we are pleased that you are delving into the issue, but on the other hand we are frustrated that these issues have been on the table without satisfactory resolution since the 1970s when the government developed the Fair Information Practice Principles. Indeed, two years ago President Obama called for the implementation of the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights and called for baseline privacy legislation. Sadly, it has yet to be introduced in Congress.

The guiding principles for governing “Big Data” are straightforward: People must be able to know what information is gathered about them, how long it is kept and for what the information will be used. They should, in fact, have control over whether their data is even collected in the first place. People should be able to correct errors in data files about them and request the deletion of data not required to complete a business transaction they initiated. Large data sets used for research purposes should be aggregate data that has been de-identified.

Sadly, little of this is true currently. In the murky world of data brokers there is virtually no transparency. People don’t know what digital dossiers have been assembled about them, what the data is used for or what decisions are being made about them without their knowledge.

We call on the Administration to introduce baseline privacy legislation and to implement the Consumer Privacy Bill of Rights. You must protect a person’s right to control whether data about him or her is collected and how it is used. In other comments you will receive, we have joined a group of public interest and consumer groups in outlining six requirements your final report must address: Transparency, oversight, accountability, robust privacy techniques, meaningful evaluation and control. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John M. Simpson".

John M. Simpson  
Privacy Project Director