

Oct. 17, 2013

Dear Members of the European Parliament,

We are writing to you on behalf of US consumers to express strong support for the new European Union Data Protection Regulation. Many of us wrote to you last year at this time to express our support and to offer specific suggestions. As we explained, “we believe that the promotion of stronger privacy standards in Europe will benefit consumers around the globe.”

We write now to underscore the urgency of adopting strong data protection legislation in the European Union. The extent of data collection and access by US intelligence agencies (and the involvement of US Internet firms) is much greater than we were aware. Moreover, the US Congress has so far failed to take necessary steps to update US privacy law or to rein in the activities of the National Security Agency. As a consequence, consumers on both sides of the Atlantic remain at risk – our most sensitive data is too readily available for scrutiny and misuse.

Many of the arguments against the EU data protection effort are no longer credible. The multi-stakeholder process has not produced meaningful outcomes. Self-regulation is not working. The “right to be forgotten” is hardly alien to the United States; California has just enacted a law to safeguard this important freedom.

And remarkably, even after the revelations this summer, on privacy Americans trust the NSA and the IRS more than they do Facebook and Google.

We remain optimistic that we will eventually update privacy laws in the United States and address the concerns of US consumers. But in the meantime it is clear that the European Union offers the best prospect for the protection of Internet users around the globe.

We urge you to adopt the strongest measures possible.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood
Center for Digital Democracy
Center for Media Justice
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Watchdog
Defending Dissent Foundation
Electronic Privacy Information Center
Essential Information
Free Press

Friends of Privacy USA
Government Accountability Project
Knowledge Ecology International
Media Alliance
Media Literacy Project
Media Mobilizing Project
National Association of Consumer Advocates
Patient Privacy Rights
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse
Public Citizen
Privacy Times
USPIRG