



Feb. 15, 2011

The Hon. Sen. Al Franken, Chairman
Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC
20510

The Hon. Sen. Tom Coburn, Ranking Member
Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC
20510

Dear Sen. Franken and Sen. Coburn,

Congratulations on assuming leadership of the new Judiciary Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law. Online technologies raise a multitude of challenges to consumers' privacy rights and it's important to have a Senate panel specifically charged with confronting those issues. Here are two concerns the committee should address immediately:

First, you should consider one of the largest privacy intrusions in history, the Google Wi-Spy scandal, in which the Internet giant's Street View cars gathered private data from consumers' Wi-Fi networks in 30 countries. Google has yet to offer an adequate explanation of the incident and what its intentions were. Google CEO Eric Schmidt should be called to testify under oath.

Second, as Sen. Franken noted, technology has put "an unprecedented amount of personal information into the hands of large companies that are unknown and unaccountable to the American public." Consumers should have the right to determine what information is gathered about them online and whether it is even gathered at all. As you know, the Federal Trade Commission has urged the creation of a Do Not Track Me mechanism to give consumers such control. Last week, Rep. Jackie Speier introduced HR 654, the "Do Not Track Me Online Act" in the House. I urge you to hold hearings on a Do Not Track Me mechanism and develop legislation as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Simpson".

John M. Simpson
Consumer advocate