

California to Redefine Ransomware Use as Extortion

September 7, 2016 - California legislators have decided to give some teeth to laws prohibiting the use of ransomware. Last week, legislators sent SB 1137 to Governor Brown's desk for his signature. The bill which passed through the State Assembly by a unanimous vote redefines the use of ransomware as extortion. That change also means that anyone caught using ransomware in California faces stiff prison sentences.

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var s = document.createElement('SCRIPT'), s1 = document.getElementsByTagName('SCRIPT')[0];  
s.type = 'text/javascript';  
s.src = 'http://widgets.digg.com/buttons.js';  
s1.parentNode.insertBefore(s, s1);  
})();
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})();
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The bill's author, Sen. Robert Hertzberg said that ransomware is an "electronic stickup." Ransomware typically encrypts files on computer systems that become infected with it and then demands a ransom from the user if they ever want access to their files again. As you may imagine, the consequences for businesses that are denied access to their computer files can be devastating. When faced with that prospect, many businesses decide to pay the ransom.

If Gov. Brown signs the bill, prosecutors will be able to call for prison terms of 2 to 4 years for anyone convicted of using ransomware. The bill also classifies programs that lock users out of their computer system or which trigger "a system malfunction" as crimes that carry the same prison sentence.

by Jim Malmberg

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