

California Consumer Privacy Act Could End Data Sharing Among Companies

June 15, 2018 - There is a ballot measure that appears to be moving towards approval to make the November election in California. It's known as the California Consumer Privacy Act and it could force companies to change the way they collect and share data. In fact, it could put an end to data sharing of any kind for consumers who value privacy.

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Needless to say, big tech companies hate the proposal and they are pouring big money into stopping it. Amazon, Google and Microsoft have all made large donations to organizations opposing the initiative. But they aren't the only ones voicing concern. Smaller donations are coming from manufacturers, retailers and wide variety of other businesses.

If you're wondering why there is so much concern among businesses, it's because if the initiative passes it will force many of them to change their business models. For instance, an online retailer such as Amazon would have to tell you exactly what information they collect on you and who they share it with. Then they would have to give you the option to opt out of individual pieces of that data-sharing or all of it.

A company like Google would also have to give you this kind of information. And because the new law defines private data very broadly, the impact on a business like Google would be immense. Things like your browser history are included in the definition of private data. Google's Chrome browser is the most popular browser in the US. And it collects that information, and uses it to track what you do on the internet. Google would be forced to allow you to keep that information private, even from them.

The fines for violating the law could be huge. \$1,000 per incident. And the law is written to allow a private right of action. That means that individual consumers would have the right to file suit against companies who violate the law.

So far, the backers of the initiative have submitted 600,000 signatures to the Secretary of State's office for verification. Only 366,000 of those signatures need to be legitimate for the proposal to make the ballot. So far, the Secretary of State has verified 158,000 of the signatures submitted. An announcement of the final decision to include the initiative on the ballot is expected on June 25th.

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