

Facebook and Google Hire Goons To Sabotage Broadband Privacy Protections For Consumers And Protect Their Spying Cartel

from the *watch-what-we-do,-not-what-we-say* dept

Last year you might recall that the GOP and Trump administration rushed to not only kill net neutrality at ISP lobbyist behest, but also some pretty basic but important consumer **privacy rules**. The protections, which **would have taken effect in March of 2017**, simply required that ISPs be transparent about what personal data is collected and sold, while mandating that ISPs provide consumers with the ability to opt of said collection. But because informed and empowered consumers damper ad revenues, ISPs moved quickly to have the rules scuttled with the help of cash-compromised lawmakers.

When California lawmakers stepped in to then try and pass their own copy of those rules, ISPs worked in concert with Google and Facebook to scuttle those rules as well. As the **EFF documented at the time**, Google, Facebook, AT&T, Verizon and Comcast all collectively and repeatedly lied to state lawmakers, claiming the planned rules would harm children, increase internet popups, and somehow "embolden extremism" on the internet. The misleading lobbying effort was successful, and the proposal was **quietly scuttled** without too much fanfare in the tech press.

Obviously this behavior has some broader implications in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Especially given Facebook's insistence this week that it's **open to being regulated** on privacy, and is "outraged" by "deception" as it tries (poorly) to mount a sensible PR response to the entire kerfuffle:

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Michael Del Moro 



@MikeDelMoro

A Facebook spokesperson says “the entire company is outraged we were deceived”

1:46 PM - Mar 20, 2018

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But last year's joint ISP and Silicon Valley assault on consumer privacy protections wasn't a one off.

California privacy advocates are again pushing a new privacy proposal, this time dubbed the **California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018**. Much like last year's effort the bill would require that companies be fully transparent about what data is being collected and sold (and to who), as well as mandating mandatory opt-out tools. And this proposal goes further than the FCC's discarded rules, in that it would ban ISPs from trying to charge consumers more for privacy, something that has already been **implemented by AT&T** (temporarily suspended as it chases merger approval) and **considered by Comcast**.

But privacy groups note that Facebook and Google are again working with major ISPs to kill the proposal, collectively funneling \$1 million into a PAC custom built for that purpose:

Lee Fang 



@lhfang

I like how this filing shows Comcast, Verizon, Google and Facebook all see themselves as equal partners each providing \$200k to crush any attempt to create consumer privacy in California [cal-](#)

[access.sos.ca.gov/PDFGen/pdfgen....](https://access.sos.ca.gov/PDFGen/pdfgen...)

5:21 PM - Mar 21, 2018

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Privacy advocates at Californians for Consumer Privacy also **wrote a letter to Facebook this week** expressing their lack of amusement at the effort in the wake of the Cambridge scandal:

"Something's not adding up here," Mactaggart writes. "It is time to be honest with Facebook users and shareholders about what information was collected, sold or breached in the Cambridge Analytica debacle; and to come clean about the true basis for your opposition to the California Consumer Privacy Act of 2018."

As we recently noted, however bad Facebook's mistakes have been on the privacy front, they're just a faint shadow of the anti-consumer behavior we've seen from the telecom sector on this front, suggesting that a disregard for privacy is a cross-industry norm, not an exemption. That said, while Google and Facebook love to portray themselves as the same kind of consumer allies they were a decade ago, their **refusal to seriously protect net neutrality** -- and their eagerness to work with loathed companies like Comcast to undermine consumer privacy -- consistently paints a decidedly different picture.