

American Civil Liberties Union
American Library Association
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Center for Digital Democracy
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of America
Consumer Watchdog
Consumers Union
FoolProof Financial Education Systems
Liberty Coalition
National Workrights Institute
Patient Privacy Rights
Privacy Camp
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse
Privacy Times
Remar Sutton, Founder—Privacy Rights Now
U.S. PIRG
World Privacy Forum

4 December 2012

OPPOSE HR 5817, Eliminates Privacy Notices

Dear Representative,

The undersigned consumer, privacy and civil liberties organizations urge you to oppose passage of HR 5817, the so-called “Eliminate Privacy Notice Confusion Act,” (which may be considered on the House suspension calendar as early as today).

HR 5817 would eliminate certain annual privacy disclosures required by the 1999 Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, if a firm had not changed its information-sharing practices.

The notices play an important role in educating consumers that federal law allows companies to share their confidential personal information profiles with both affiliated and non-affiliated companies, regardless of their own personal preference, and provides them with a limited right to opt-out of some third-party sharing. Instead of eliminating this important transparency, the Congress should require firms to tell consumers what their current choices are for information sharing and the Congress should, as California has already taken some steps to do, give consumers more privacy rights.

HR 5817, it should be noted, had no public hearing, and while a broader regulatory relief bill, HR 1697, that included its provisions, did have a hearing, no privacy experts were asked to testify and neither bill has had a markup in either subcommittee or full committee. While our organizations would prefer comprehensive privacy rights to the modest privacy notices provided instead, it is critical that consumers receive an annual reminder that companies are allowed to share their information, often regardless of their own personal preferences. For more information, your staff can contact Ed Mierzwinski at U.S. PIRG, 202-461-3821 or edm@pirg.org.

Sincerely,

Signers on next page

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