18115 Campus Way NE

Bothell, WA 98011

November 27, 2017

Senator Patty Murray

154 Russell Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Patty Murray:

I am reaching out to you today to express the importance of protecting the right to be forgotten in the United States.

**Introduction**

Trends in technology have allowed modern civilization to reach new levels of prosperity, wealth and access to information. Despite these advances, American citizens have found that such unrestrained access to personal information can have a negative impact their lives. The right to be forgotten is a relativity new but critical legal definition that is designed to help protect individuals from having their information seen by a third party. Unfortunately, current privacy laws have loop holes that fall short of protecting average Americans. T**he right to be forgotten needs to be championed by enacting an online privacy bill in Congress.**

**Current Technology Trends Invade Privacy**

Studies show that 87% Americans have access to the internet and 95% have mobile phones allowing companies to invade individual privacy on an unprecedented level (Adnerson and Perrin).

* While use of the internet has risen each year, roughly 50% of Americans feel they have little or no control of their online privacy with 37% saying they have “some control” (Madden). This feeling of having little control of their own data could be improved if congress helped regulate online privacy providing Americans more upfront options.
* Currently, companies like Walmart and Target are able to easily collect information through online searches or what Americans buy in the store. A great example is when Target, a major retailer, was able to use data from one of their customers to determine she was pregnant prior to her family even knowing (Hill). The right to be forgotten would prevent companies from compiling such data troves on individuals without explicit permissions.
* Americans of all ages post information that they did not think would be kept on sites that could be searched by third party individuals later. Roughly 91% of Americans reported to have “lost control over how personal information is collected and used by companies” (Madden). The right to be forgotten would require information that Americans post to be protected, secured, and easy to remove.

**Companies Benefit Off of Americans’ Privacy**

Internet and advertising companies are making massive profits off of hurting Americans due to the loop holes in current privacy rights laws.

* In 2016, Facebook made $62.60 in revenue and $13.54 of profit per user (Close) (Titcomb) by tracking users across the web without their knowledge and explicit consent. A law regulating online privacy would prevent this exploitation of unsuspecting Americans by preventing this type of activity without consent or warning.
* Companies that many Americans never heard like Acxiom have massive amounts of data by buying information from other companies. In an interview with Newsweek, Acxiom confirmed that they had roughly 1500 pieces of information average on 200 million Americans (Boutin). The right to be forgotten would prevent companies to sell individuals information without explicit permission by the user or with a portion of profits going back to the user.
* Furthermore, firms that have profited from buying and selling Americans’ data have not done enough to protect it. Breaches are common place putting Americans’ personal, financial and healthcare records into malicious hands. Just in 2017, Equifax’s data breach might have compromised 143 million Americans’ data (Ng and Musil). The right to be forgotten would allow Americans the ability to manage the data collected on them preventing mitigating the risk of such attacks.

**Americans’ Past Affect Their Future**

Unlike many other privacy issues, modern day technology not only infringes on people’s private life, but also hinders their futures.

* The easy access to the amount unregulated data on everyone has affected how companies are hiring employees. In a national survey, 51% of surveyed employers said they would not hire candidates due to their social media profiles (Grasz). An online privacy bill would prevent companies from searching this kind of information or to have permission from the candidate.
* Although collected data poses a problem for many Americans, a minor lapse of judgement in one’s online history can also spell doom for college apps, internships, and work applications. In a recent poll, 57% of Americans reported to have said they regretted posting something online (Shane). The right to be forgotten would allow Americans to manage these posts and be able to easily and quickly take them down before they impact their lives.
* Additionally, with the advent of mass hacking and vengeful exes, pictures and videos that were never meant to have been public are being leaked. Research has found that up to 10 million Americans have been affected by this trend providing the hacker with power over the victims (Janjigian). To prevent situations like this, the right to be forgotten should set harsher punishments to perpetrators uploading information without consent or to owners maintaining these sites.

**Conclusion**

With America entering the 21st century and the ascent of technology that impacts almost everyone, the right to be forgotten has become a critical piece of legislation that needs to be passed by congress. From protecting privacy and personal data, to allowing Americans to advance their careers. Americans stand to benefit immensely from passing legislation on the right to be forgotten. As a leader and a high ranking senator, please lead your peers in the senate to cosign and produce an online privacy bill ensuring the right to be forgotten.

I thank you for taking your time to read through this.

Sincerely,

Misha R. Ward

**University of Washington – Bothell Student**

Computer Software and Software Engineering B.S.

Business Administration B.A., Cum Laude

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