

**Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Committee On The Judiciary,
Hearing on “The Location Privacy Protection Act of 2014”
Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law
June 4, 2014**

Today, the Subcommittee on Privacy, Technology and the Law will discuss Senator Franken’s Location Privacy Protection Act, which he reintroduced earlier this year. I commend the Subcommittee’s Chairman for holding this important hearing and for his work on consumer privacy issues.

With the explosion of smart technologies and mobile applications, now commonly referred to as “apps,” American consumers face threats to privacy now like never before. Many of us carry smart devices, such as smartphones and tablets, at all times and use them for anything from navigational and social networking purposes to shopping and playing games. While this technology has brought many new benefits to consumers, it has also raised troubling questions and presented new challenges for how to protect individuals’ privacy.

Over the past year, Congress has spent a good deal of time debating important questions relating to government collection of Americans’ data. But I also remain concerned about reports that more and more mobile apps are collecting, storing, and tracking location data for their own commercial purposes without adequately informing users, and that this location data can too easily be misused to commit crimes – including cyber-stalking and domestic violence. Last year, the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act expanded the definition of stalking to include threats or harassment by any electronic means. This important change strengthens protections for victims and gives law enforcement the ability to bring cyberstalkers to justice. Senator Franken’s bill builds on that foundation by addressing the growing problem of “stalking apps,” which permit abusers to track their victims’ location without their knowledge.

As smart technologies become an ever larger part of our daily lives, the widespread commercial collection of geolocation data will continue to grow. Americans deserve to have more control over this information, and Congress must keep a watchful eye on how this data is collected and used. I look forward to learning the witnesses’ perspective on this important issue.

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