

Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO) Appeals FTC Misuse of "Precise Geolocation Data" in Privacy Report

News
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

San Diego, CA, July 25, 2012 - The Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO) has asked Federal Trade Commission Chairman Jonathan Leibowitz to address the concerns of the geospatial community in its privacy report.

In March 2012, the FTC released a report, "Protecting Consumer Privacy in an Era of Rapid Change" providing recommended actions for business and policy makers to protect consumers' private information.

In the letter to the FTC, COGO points out that during the comment period, the FTC had assured the geospatial community that the intent of the report was not to cover the ordinary activities of the geospatial community. The FTC had indicated that a definition of the term "precise geolocation data" or an exception for the legal, legitimate and ordinary activities in the professional geospatial practice would be included in the Commission's final report.

"The Coalition has been concerned from the start that the professional services provided through surveying, mapping and geospatial data collection would be harmed with the impractical requirement of a consumer choice mechanism," said Dr. Carolyn Merry, chair of the Department of Civil, Environmental and Geodetic Engineering at The Ohio State University and COGO Chair.

COGO has expressed its concern that footnote 187 in the [final report](#) does not adequately address the activities of the geospatial community. The coalition of 11 geospatial associations said the wording in the footnote is not as comprehensive as the FTC had led COGO and the community to believe it would be. In its letter to Leibowitz, COGO urged the FTC to modify text within the body of the report to clarify the issue.

COGO has suggested revisions to the report such that the requirement for individual consumer approval or "affirmative express consent" prior to the collection, sharing or use of "precise geolocation data" be further clarified and eliminated.

"The revisions, additions and clarifications COGO has suggested would provide clarity with respect to parcels and addresses," said Jeff Lovin (Woolpert, Inc., Dayton, OH), MAPPS Delegate to COGO, which originated the letter. "One footnote in a 122-page report does not go far enough to protect areas of professional services that have not been identified as a problem or pose any privacy concern to citizens." The letter can be [viewed here](#).

About COGO

Formed in 2008, the Coalition of Geospatial Organizations (COGO) (www.cogo.pro) is a coalition of 11 voting member and four advisory member national professional societies, trade associations, and membership organizations in the geospatial field, representing more than 30,000 individual producers and users of geospatial data and technology. The coalition's Member Organizations are:

- American Congress on Surveying and Mapping (ACSM)
- American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS)
- Geographic Information Systems Certification Institute (GISCI)
- Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS)
- United States Geospatial Intelligence Foundation (USGIF)
- University Consortium for Geographic Information Science (UCGIS)
- Association of American Geographers (AAG)
- Cartography and Geographic Information Society (CaGIS)
- International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO)

National States Geographic Information Council (NSGIC)
Urban Regional Information Systems Association (URISA)

Associate Members:

National Association of Counties (NACo)
National Emergency Number Association (NENA)
Western Governors Association (WGA)
American Planning Association (APA)

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To view the COGO letter, go to:

http://cogo.pro/uploads/COGO-FTCletter-PrivacyReport_Chairman_Leibowitz_July52012.pdf

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