

Senator seeks US probe of smartphone privacy

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Senator Charles Schumer, pictured in February, called for a government probe into whether smartphone applications used on the Apple and Android platforms can steal private data including photos and address books.

A leading US senator called Monday for a government probe into whether smartphone applications used on the Apple and Android platforms can steal private data including photos and address books.

Senator Charles Schumer, a New York Democrat, urged the [Federal Trade Commission](#) to launch an investigation, following reports that applications on the mobile devices can access and steal [private data](#) without the consent of users.

"When someone takes a private photo, on a private cell phone, it should remain just that: private," Schumer said in a statement as he released a

letter to the FTC expressing concern over "a disturbing and potentially unfair practice in the smartphone application market."

"Smartphone developers have an obligation to protect the private content of their users and not allow them to be veritable treasure troves of private, personal information that can then be uploaded and distributed without the consumer's consent."

Schumer's call came after a New York Times report said that [iPhone](#) and Android applications downloaded by users can gain access to a customer's private photo collection, and in some cases share the information online.

This report comes on the heels of a discovery that applications on Apple devices like the iPhone and iPad were able to upload entire address books with names, phone numbers, and email address to their own servers, Schumer's statement said.

"It sends shivers up the spine to think that one's personal photos, address book, and who-knows-what-else can be obtained and even posted online -- without consent," the senator said.

"If the technology exists to open the door to this kind of privacy invasion, then surely technology exists to close it, and that's exactly what must happen."

The latest outcry comes less than a week after [Google](#) rolled out a new privacy policy allowing the firm to track users across various services to develop targeted advertising, despite sharp criticism from US and European consumer advocacy groups.

Google said its privacy approach had not changed but that the new effort unifies its policy across various services such as search, email, and

mobile devices powered by its [Android](#) software.

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