

Facebook vote ends experiment with democracy

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The referendum was opposed by 87 percent of the 668,125 members who cast ballots, according to a posting on the Facebook governance site.

But Facebook had indicated that if fewer than 30 percent of Facebook's one billion users voted, the California-based firm would be free to go forward with a plan to eliminate the voting structure and integrate Instagram data for ad purposes.

Facebook bought smartphone-picture sharing service Instagram early this year in a cash and stock deal valued at a billion dollars at the time.

A week ago, Facebook asked its members to vote on an overhaul of privacy and other policies in what on Monday became the last binding referendum of its kind at the huge social network.

The social media giant, which has drawn fresh fire from privacy activists for the proposed changes on how it manages users' data, said the poll would be binding only if it gets responses from 30 percent of members—or 300 million people.

The changes end the voting process, and also would permit sharing of information with its newly acquired photo-sharing service, Instagram.

Additionally, the changes would make it easier for advertisers and others to send messages on Facebook, limiting users' control, according to privacy rights groups.

Activists have raised a ruckus, saying the new policies, if implemented, could violate some laws or Facebook's agreement with US regulators earlier this year after complaints from privacy groups.

The Electronic Privacy Information Center urged Facebook users to vote no, saying the changes "would end user voting, remove spam blocking, and combine personal information from Facebook with data from photo-blogging site Instagram."

Facebook said in a message to users last month that the vote system—implemented in 2009—"resulted in a system that incentivized the quantity of comments over their quality."

Facebook's stock price tumbled after its hotly anticipated market debut in May at \$38 a share, in part due to concerns over ad and revenue growth.

However, Facebook shares have rallied in recent weeks and were up slightly to \$27.92 on Monday.

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