

Facebook kicks off vote on new policies

December 3 2012



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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 will

be binding only if it gets responses from 30 percent of members—or 300 million people.

"We've heard from many of you through our comment process. We are grateful that you took the time to share your thoughts," Elliot Schrage, Facebook's [vice president](#) of communications, said in a post on the company's governance site as he announced the vote.

The proposed changes unveiled last month could 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](#).

Schrage said one aspect of its proposed data-sharing policy was revised "to make it clear that the sharing of information among our affiliates is and will be done in compliance with all applicable laws, and where additional consent of our users is required, we will obtain it."

But before finalizing the changes, he said there will be a vote, possibly the last of its kind.

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."

"Therefore, we're proposing to end the voting component of the process

in favor of a system that leads to more meaningful feedback and engagement," Facebook said last month.

Facebook kicked off the vote at 2000 GMT Monday, and will end it in a week, on December 10.

"As stated in both policies, if more than 30 percent of all active registered users vote, the results will be binding," Schrage said. "If turnout is less than 30 percent, the vote will be advisory."

The voting will be done via a Facebook application from a third-party service provider.

"An independent auditor will examine the [vote](#) tabulation to further ensure accurate results," Schrage said.

The controversy highlights Facebook's quandary on how it can monetize data from its billion [users](#) worldwide by sharing information and still live up to its pledge to protect privacy.

[Facebook](#)'s stock price has tumbled since its hotly anticipated market debut in May at \$38 a share, in part due to concerns over ad and revenue growth. The stock fell 3.4 percent to \$27.04 on Monday.

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Citation: Facebook kicks off vote on new policies (2012, December 3) retrieved 25 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-facebook-vote-policies.html>

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