

US tech industry steps up push on surveillance reforms

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A letter to Senate leaders signed by some of the largest US tech firms said reforms "are necessary to help restore public trust in both the US government and the US technology sector, as well as to continue the innovative and competitive success of the American tech sector in global markets."

The letter comes weeks after the House of Representatives passed a watered-down plan to reform the National Security Agency and its data collection capabilities, in light of revelations of widespread monitoring of phone and online communications of millions at home and overseas, based on leaked secret documents from former NSA contractor Edward Snowden.

The late amendments infuriated some in Silicon Valley, and reform advocates are now pinning their hopes on the Senate version of the so-called USA Freedom Act.

But no vote is scheduled in the brief legislative session begun Monday ahead of the midterm November elections.

"As a result of the surveillance program revelations, US [technology companies](#) have experienced negative economic implications in overseas markets," said a letter endorsed by five major tech organizations that include members such as Google, Microsoft, Apple and Facebook.

"In addition, other countries are considering proposals that would limit data flows between countries, which would have a negative impact on the efficiencies upon which the borderless Internet relies. The transparency measures in the USA Freedom Act are designed to alleviate some of the concerns behind such actions by allowing companies to be more transparent about the orders they receive from the government pursuant to its surveillance authorities."

The measure pending in the Senate would curb the NSA's ability to collect bulk phone data from Americans and provides more safeguards for warrantless surveillance.

The proposal includes other privacy provisions, including the creation of a special advocate to monitor civil liberties issues before a secret US surveillance court.

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