



Washington State National Organization for Women

Privacy

Washington State National Organization for Women (NOW) supports legislation that assures individuals the right to Privacy – Organizations conducting business online should be required to disclose how they collect and use personal data. Consumers should have the right to prevent financial institutions and businesses from giving or selling personal financial information to telemarketers. Confidentiality about medical records and decisions must be strictly maintained between the patient and his/her doctor.

Business and Financial Records Privacy

Just as easy access to digital information enables us to learn more about the world around us, it also has the inverse effect. It allows the world to learn more about us. And that's making people increasingly uneasy.

Internet commerce cannot thrive without a strong and reliable code of ethics regarding personal information. A code that will allow consumers to have complete confidence. Yet, online commerce is developing so rapidly, and competitive pressures are so strong, we cannot rely on industry alone to maintain such a code.

- Companies conducting business online should be required to disclose how they collect and use personal data .
- Companies that distribute data about you should be required to allow you to inspect and correct the data .
- Companies should provide consumers information on how and why their personal information is being collected.
- Consumers should have the right to block the transfer of personal information to third parties. Information transferred to third parties must have the consumers authorization. Any information used or disclosed should be limited to the amount necessary for the use or disclosure.

Medical Privacy

Washington State NOW supports federal and state legislation that would :

- Establish an individual's right to privacy with respect to individually identifiable health information, including genetic information. Individuals should retain the right to decide to whom, and under what circumstances, their individually identifiable health information will be disclosed. Confidentiality protections should extend not only to medical records, but also to other information, including genetic test results, clinical research records, mental health therapy notes, etc.

- Prohibit the use or disclosure of individually identifiable health information without the individual's informed consent and authorization. Any information used or disclosed should be limited to the amount necessary for the use or disclosure. Unauthorized disclosure should be permitted only under exceptional circumstances (e.g., if a person's life is endangered, if there is a threat to public health, or if there is a compelling law enforcement need).
- Guarantee an individual the right to access his or her own health information and the right to amend such information. Individuals should have this right so they can make informed health care decisions and can correct erroneous information.
- Establish strong and effective remedies for violations of privacy protections. Remedies should include a private right of action, as well as civil penalties and criminal sanctions where appropriate.
- Not impede important clinical and medical research. For example, researchers should be allowed to continue using existing anonymous patient data bases and tissue samples. Research should not be defined so broadly as to permit the disclosure of individually identifiable health information for marketing or commercial purposes.