

## ***Cable TV Privacy Act of 1984***

47 USC Sec. 551 01/24/94

-EXPCITE-

### **TITLE 47 - TELEGRAPHS, TELEPHONES, AND RADIOTELEGRAPHS**

#### **CHAPTER 5 - WIRE OR RADIO COMMUNICATION**

#### **SUBCHAPTER V-A - CABLE COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **Part IV - Miscellaneous Provisions**

#### **-HEAD-**

Sec. 551. Protection of subscriber privacy

#### **-STATUTE-**

(a) Notice to subscriber regarding personally identifiable

information; definitions

(1) At the time of entering into an agreement to provide any cable service or other service to a subscriber and at least once a year thereafter, a cable operator shall provide notice in the form of a separate, written statement to such subscriber which clearly and conspicuously informs the subscriber of -

(A) the nature of personally identifiable information collected or to be collected with respect to the subscriber and the nature of the use of such information;

(B) the nature, frequency, and purpose of any disclosure which may be made of such information, including an identification of the types of persons to whom the disclosure may be made;

(C) the period during which such information will be maintained

by the cable operator;

(D) the times and place at which the subscriber may have access

to such information in accordance with subsection (d) of this

section; and

(E) the limitations provided by this section with respect to

the collection and disclosure of information by a cable operator

and the right of the subscriber under subsections (f) and (h) of

this section to enforce such limitations.

In the case of subscribers who have entered into such an agreement

before the effective date of this section, such notice shall be

provided within 180 days of such date and at least once a year

thereafter.

(2) For purposes of this section, other than subsection (h) of

this section -

(A) the term "personally identifiable information" does not

include any record of aggregate data which does not identify

particular persons;

(B) the term "other service" includes any wire or radio

communications service provided using any of the facilities of a

cable operator that are used in the provision of cable service;

and

(C) the term "cable operator" includes, in addition to

persons within the definition of cable operator in section 522 of

this title, any person who (i) is owned or controlled by, or

under common ownership or control with, a cable operator, and

(ii) provides any wire or radio communications service.

(b) Collection of personally identifiable information using cable system

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a cable operator shall not use the cable system to collect personally identifiable information concerning any subscriber without the prior written or electronic consent of the subscriber concerned.

(2) A cable operator may use the cable system to collect such information in order to -

(A) obtain information necessary to render a cable service or other service provided by the cable operator to the subscriber;

or

(B) detect unauthorized reception of cable communications.

(c) Disclosure of personally identifiable information

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (2), a cable operator shall not disclose personally identifiable information concerning any subscriber without the prior written or electronic consent of the subscriber concerned and shall take such actions as are necessary to prevent unauthorized access to such information by a person other than the subscriber or cable operator.

(2) A cable operator may disclose such information if the disclosure is -

(A) necessary to render, or conduct a legitimate business activity related to, a cable service or other service provided by

the cable operator to the subscriber;

(B) subject to subsection (h) of this section, made pursuant to a court order authorizing such disclosure, if the subscriber is notified of such order by the person to whom the order is directed; or

(C) a disclosure of the names and addresses of subscribers to any cable service or other service, if -

(i) the cable operator has provided the subscriber the opportunity to prohibit or limit such disclosure, and

(ii) the disclosure does not reveal, directly or indirectly, the -

(I) extent of any viewing or other use by the subscriber of a cable service or other service provided by the cable operator, or

(II) the nature of any transaction made by the subscriber over the cable system of the cable operator.

(d) Subscriber access to information

A cable subscriber shall be provided access to all personally identifiable information regarding that subscriber which is collected and maintained by a cable operator. Such information shall be made available to the subscriber at reasonable times and at a convenient place designated by such cable operator. A cable subscriber shall be provided reasonable opportunity to correct any error in such information.

(e) Destruction of information

A cable operator shall destroy personally identifiable information if the information is no longer necessary for the purpose for which it was collected and there are no pending requests or orders for access to such information under subsection (d) of this section or pursuant to a court order.

(f) Civil action in United States district court; damages; attorney's fees and costs; nonexclusive nature of remedy

(1) Any person aggrieved by any act of a cable operator in violation of this section may bring a civil action in a United States district court.

(2) The court may award -

(A) actual damages but not less than liquidated damages computed at the rate of \$100 a day for each day of violation or \$1,000, whichever is higher;

(B) punitive damages; and

(C) reasonable attorneys' fees and other litigation costs reasonably incurred.

(3) The remedy provided by this section shall be in addition to any other lawful remedy available to a cable subscriber.

(g) Regulation by States or franchising authorities

Nothing in this subchapter shall be construed to prohibit any State or any franchising authority from enacting or enforcing laws consistent with this section for the protection of subscriber privacy.

(h) Disclosure of information to governmental entity pursuant to

court order

A governmental entity may obtain personally identifiable information concerning a cable subscriber pursuant to a court order only if, in the court proceeding relevant to such court order -

(1) such entity offers clear and convincing evidence that the subject of the information is reasonably suspected of engaging in criminal activity and that the information sought would be material evidence in the case; and

(2) the subject of the information is afforded the opportunity to appear and contest such entity's claim.

**-SOURCE-**

(June 19, 1934, ch. 652, title VI, Sec. 631, as added Oct. 30, 1984, Pub. L. 98-549, Sec. 2, 98 Stat. 2794; amended Oct. 5, 1992, Pub. L. 102-385, Sec. 20, 106 Stat. 1497.)

**-REFTEXT-**

**REFERENCES IN TEXT**

For "the effective date of this section", referred to in subsec. (a)(1), as 60 days after Oct. 30, 1984, except where otherwise expressly provided, see section 9(a) of Pub. L. 98-549, set out as an Effective Date note under section 521 of this title.

**-MISC2-**

**AMENDMENTS**

1992 - Subsec. (a)(2). Pub. L. 102-385, Sec. 20(a), amended par. (2) generally. Prior to amendment, par. (2) read as follows: "For purposes of this section, the term 'personally identifiable

information' does not include any record of aggregate data which  
does not identify particular persons."

Subsec. (c)(1). Pub. L. 102-385, Sec. 20(b), inserted before  
period at end "and shall take such actions as are necessary to  
prevent unauthorized access to such information by a person other  
than the subscriber or cable operator".

#### **EFFECTIVE DATE OF 1992 AMENDMENT**

Amendment by Pub. L. 102-385 effective 60 days after Oct. 5,  
1992, see section 28 of Pub. L. 102-385, set out as a note under  
section 325 of this title.

#### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

Section effective 60 days after Oct. 30, 1984, except where  
otherwise expressly provided, see section 9(a) of Pub. L. 98-549,  
set out as a note under section 521 of this title.