<u>What is broadband privacy</u>?
Broadband privacy is the idea that consumers like you have the right to determine whether and how your personal information is collected and used by your internet service provider (ISP).

<u>Why should you care about broadband privacy</u>?
ISPs are, in effect, the gatekeepers of the internet, and most consumers willingly pay them for access. Many consumers don't realize, however, that ISPs collect and sell many kinds of sensitive and private information.

User information that ISPs routinely collect and share with business partners includes "geo-location" data, which can be used to determine precisely where you live and travel to, and when; details about your health and financial status; your web browsing and app usage history; and your social security number. ISPs can even delve into and extract information from the contents of your communications, including email, social media postings, and instant messages.

The potential misuses of personal information goes well beyond aggressive product marketing: It gives virtually anyone willing to pay—identity thieves and other scam artists, employers, insurance and financial service providers, business and professional rivals, and even former romantic partners—the ability to assemble a detailed and highly personal dossier of your life. Communications with doctors or lawyers, political activities, job inquiries, dating site history...essentially anything you do or express on the internet that you would like to keep private, could all be examined and used to your disadvantage.

In short, consumers should not have to sacrifice their privacy or security in order to benefit from the power of the internet.

<u>The current state of broadband privacy</u>
Consumers are reasonable to expect strong rules governing the use of their personal data. For one thing, they're already protected in many areas: Unauthorized use of telephone calling data, for example, has long been regulated by the Federal Communications Commission to prevent privacy violations.

And the FCC did pass a rule in late 2016 requiring ISPs to obtain customer permission before sharing personal information, and preventing ISPs from denying service to customers who would not give that permission. (The rule also mandated security measures that protect customer data from hackers.)

Unfortunately, in April 2017 Congress passed—and the President signed—a law repealing the FCC rule and preventing the FCC from creating a similar rule in the future.

In response, 21 states (as of July 2017) have introduced broadband rules to protect the privacy and security of their residents' personal data.

<u>What you can do to increase broadband privacy</u>
Consumers remain vulnerable, so more needs to be done—and consumer can play an important role.

Start by voting with your feet. The defeat of the federal broadband privacy rule does not prevent ISPs from competing on the basis of consumer privacy. If you have a choice of service providers, research their privacy practices and chose the one with the more consumer-friendly policy. And make sure to explain your rationale to the ISPs so they understand that the issue matters to you.

If you don't have a choice, complain to your provider—and then consider taking [steps to protect](#) your own digital security and privacy. One option is to set up a [virtual private network](#) in order to help keep your web traffic private.

On the legislative front, efforts to reinstate the FCC's broadband privacy rule at the federal level are underway. So we urge you to contact your congressional representatives to support those efforts.

Given the current political environment, however, we believe that state-level broadband privacy legislative efforts have the best chance of succeeding. So we also urge you to contact your state elected officials to demand better broadband privacy protections.