



Consumer Federation of America

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Consumers Being Denied Adequate Means to Participate in Developing Privacy Guidelines

***Statement of Susan Grant, CFA Director of Consumer Protection on the Need
for a Seat at the Table When it Comes to NTIA Privacy Discussions***

Washington, D.C. – Today Consumer Federation of America (CFA) joined with the American Civil Liberties Union, the Center for Digital Democracy, Common Sense Media, Consumer Action, Consumer Watchdog, Consumers Union, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Privacy Lives, Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, Privacy Times and U.S. PIRG sent a [letter](#) to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) in the U.S. Department of Commerce to reiterate our concerns that civil society will not have a real voice in the multistakeholder process to develop voluntary privacy codes of conduct for industry. For months we have been telling the NTIA that for this process to be credible and have any chance of success, there must be robust civil society participation. Consumer and privacy groups invariably have far fewer resources than corporations and trade associations, so even for those that are located in Washington, participating in this process represents a serious commitment of scarce resources. For groups that would have to send representatives to Washington from afar for meetings, the situation is even more difficult. That is why the [Principles for the Multistakeholder Process](#) that CFA and several other consumer and privacy groups issued last April state that if resources cannot be provided to facilitate in-person participation, the meetings should only be held electronically. This would ensure that everyone is on a level playing field.

Despite the fact that no resources are being provided to facilitate civil society participation, however, the NTIA has decided to hold the inaugural multistakeholder meeting on July 12 in person and to provide remote participation by having NTIA staff act as proxy for people who are not physically present, taking their questions and comments and relaying them to those in the room. This is simply inadequate and it makes us wonder if we are really being heard. It is not an auspicious way to begin the process. We want two-way, contemporaneous communication to enable everyone to speak for themselves, and our letter describes solutions that have been used in other forums successfully and that should be easy for the NTIA to deploy. It is vitally important that civil society can fully participate in the first meeting of the multistakeholder process and in all subsequent meetings. The NTIA must find a better way to ensure that our voices can be heard.

The Consumer Federation of America is a non-profit association of some 280 national, state, and local pro-consumer organizations founded in 1968 to promote the consumer interest through research, education and advocacy.