

The Privacy Act Modernization Act of 2025

The Privacy Act Modernization Act strengthens protections for personal data held by the government, and makes it easier for Americans to sue for violations, like DOGE's unfettered access to Americans' sensitive personal information.

Since January 20, 2025, the Trump Administration has overseen the systematic and ongoing unlawful disclosure of American' sensitive personal data from critical government systems. Trump has empowered Elon Musk, DOGE, and their agents to recklessly access systems containing sensitive information like addresses, social security numbers, and health and financial information. They have fired officials responsible for overseeing government compliance with privacy laws and sought to disrupt systems critical to core government functions like making payments to grantees and beneficiaries like Social Security and Medicaid recipients.

The Privacy Act of 1974 has helped Americans understand what records are collected about them and required safeguards to prevent misuse of their information. The Act was passed to remedy a loss of faith in government following the Watergate and COINTELPRO scandals. However, lawmakers in 1974 could not have anticipated the wanton abuse of the government's information systems overseen in recent weeks by DOGE and their agents. The Privacy Act must be updated to protect essential government systems and Americans' sensitive data from these egregious abuses.

The Privacy Act Modernization Act of 2025 blocks recent DOGE and Trump Administration actions by closing loopholes and strengthening the remedies available to Americans who have been harmed by DOGE actions. **Specifically, the Privacy Act Modernization Act of 2025:**

- Increases civil and criminal penalties for violations of the Privacy Act, including criminal penalties of \$100,000 and possible imprisonment for disclosing records for personal gain, malicious harm, or commercial advantage.
- Strengthens court authority to stop programs and actions while lawsuits are pending, and allows Americans to recover for a range of damages, including the mental and emotional distress caused by privacy violations.
- Modernizes the law to cover any information that identifies or is linked or reasonably linkable to an individual or a device that is linked or reasonably linkable to an individual.
- Limits information sharing to the minimum necessary for a legally authorized purpose, and only if consistent with what an agency previously stated they would use records for.
- Narrows the so-called "routine use" exception for sharing information, by further requiring that "routine use" disclosures be "appropriate and reasonably necessary."