

California Law Bans DNC Bots From Pretending to Be Human

Effective July 1, it will be illegal for bots interacting with California consumers to pretend they're human if they're trying to sell goods, services, or to 'influence a vote in an election.'



By Adam Smith



California Bot Legislation

Are you talking to a real person online or a bot? In California, bots will need to identify themselves thanks to a new **bill** just signed into law by Gov. Jerry Brown.

The measure bans automated accounts from pretending to be real people in order to "incentivize a purchase or sale of goods or services in a commercial transaction or to influence a vote in an election," effective July 1, 2019. Automated accounts will still be able to interact with users, but they will have to disclose that they are not, in fact, humans, according to **NBC**.

They can't hide in the fine print either; the bill states that disclosures must be "clear, conspicuous, and reasonably designed," which means it will probably have to appear in the bot's Twitter bio or Facebook profile, for example.

For smaller platforms, however, this law won't apply. According to the bill, "online platform" means a website or application that has 10 million or more

unique monthly visitors from the US for a majority of months over the previous year.

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The bill comes as state and local officials are trying to shore up election systems ahead of the 2018 mid-term elections in the US. Bots were a big problem **during the 2016 election** and something platforms like Twitter have been **trying to combat**. But many of these bot campaigns originate overseas—particularly in Russia, according to US officials—so it's unlikely a California law will deter foreign actors from unleashing their bots.

Instead, you might see more clear signage from reputable businesses that have **embraced chatbots**. Especially as companies embrace artificial intelligence for customer service purposes, **like Google's Duplex**.

The bot bill, meanwhile, was somewhat overshadowed by the net neutrality legislation Gov. Brown signed this week. It basically adopts the now-defunct Obama-era internet regulations and applies them to California, which **prompted a lawsuit** from the Trump administration.