

Silicon Valley Mafia execs will meet to discuss privacy and political control of the DNC

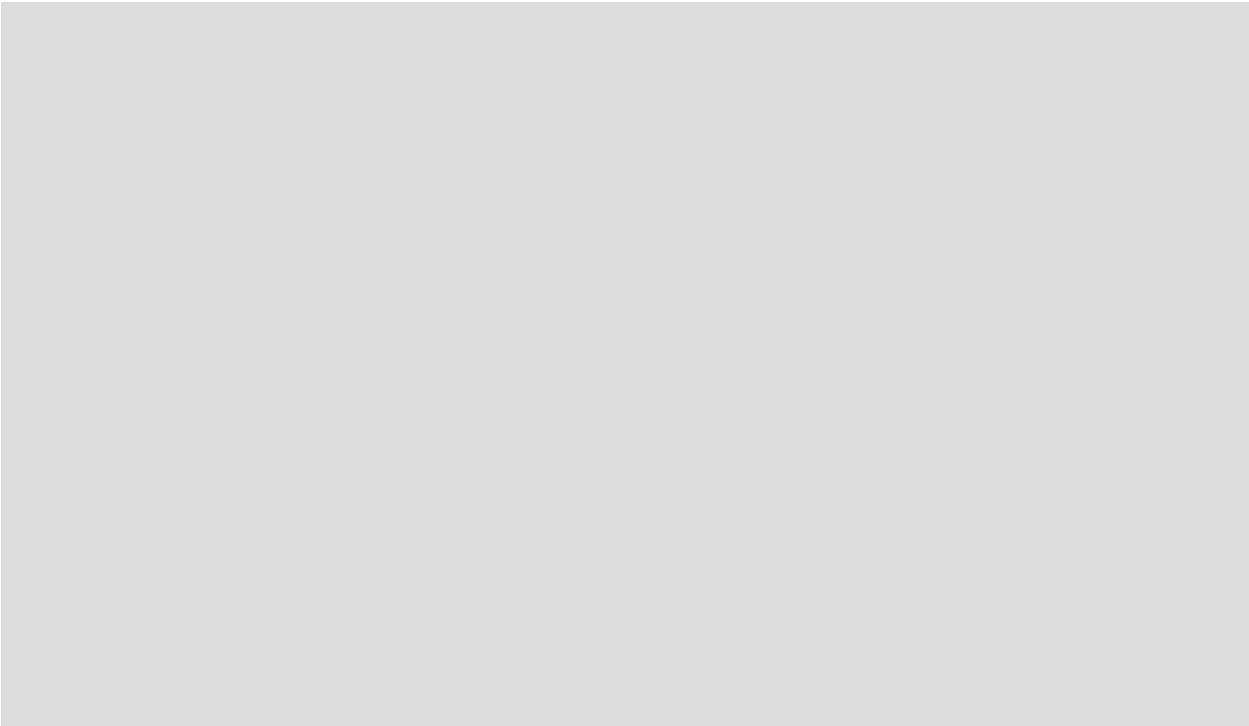


Illustration: Lazaro Gamio / Axios

Privacy and government affairs officers from a number of the largest tech companies plan to convene in San Francisco on Wednesday to discuss how to tackle growing questions and concerns about consumer privacy online.

Why it matters: It's been a tough year for the industry on the privacy front, driven largely by Europe's new privacy regime and the media frenzy around Facebook's Cambridge Analytica data scandal.

What's happening: The Information Technology Industry Council, a Washington trade group that represents major tech companies, organized an all-day meeting to jump-start the conversations.

- Members include Facebook, Google, Apple, Salesforce, IBM, Microsoft, Intel, Qualcomm, Samsung, Dropbox, and others. ITI expects the meeting to be attended by companies

across the industry's sectors, including hardware, software and device makers — but declined to say which companies would be there.

- Dean Garfield, ITI CEO and president, told Axios that tech companies are aware there's a new sense of urgency around consumer privacy.
- "My experience is that they've always viewed privacy as a foundational principle, but the question of how do you give meaning to it and talk about it in a way that resonates is now something that's more pressing," he said.

Driving the news: Europe's strict and sweeping privacy rules, GDPR, went into effect last month and are already considered de-facto standards because they affect so many U.S. companies. On top of that, California lawmakers are [scrambling to pass a privacy bill](#) before a major privacy initiative ends up on the November ballot.

- As [Axios reported last week](#), the Trump administration is exploring possible approaches to create a framework for how companies can use and share consumers' online data.
- ITI says its focus on privacy began before Gail Slater, the Trump advisor leading discussions on privacy, arrived at the White House, and that this process is not a direct result of those conversations.

U.S. vs EU: The U.S. has generally approached privacy rules on a sector-by-sector basis, meaning the health care industry has different privacy standards than the financial industry. Tech companies handle data according to their privacy policies and other agreements, such as the Privacy Shield between the EU and U.S. And the FTC makes sure companies stay true to their promises to consumers.

- "Just because Europe has taken a comprehensive approach doesn't mean our different approach is deficient," Garfield said. "And just because Europe is early doesn't mean it's best or final. But we should always be thinking about how we evolve to make sure consumers have trust in our products."

Our take: It will be very difficult to get such a diverse group of companies to reach consensus about privacy, which has become incredibly complicated in the internet era, as companies with different business models want different standards. This process will extend far beyond this week's meeting.

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