

## **NO to DHS Social Media Password Requirement**

*21 February 2017*

*Coalition Condemns DHS Proposal to Demand Passwords to Enter the U.S.*

The undersigned coalition of human rights and civil liberties organizations, trade associations, and experts in security, technology, and the law expresses deep concern about the comments made by Secretary John Kelly at the House Homeland Security Committee hearing on February 7th, 2017, suggesting the Department of Homeland Security could require non-citizens to provide the passwords to their social media accounts as a condition of entering the country.

We recognize the important role that DHS plays in protecting the United States' borders and the challenges it faces in keeping the U.S. safe, but demanding passwords or other account credentials without cause will fail to increase the security of U.S. citizens and is a direct assault on fundamental rights.

This proposal would enable border officials to invade people's privacy by examining years of private emails, texts, and messages. It would expose travelers and everyone in their social networks, including potentially millions of U.S. citizens, to excessive, unjustified scrutiny. And it would discourage people from using online services or taking their devices with them while traveling, and would discourage travel for business, tourism, and journalism.

Demands from U.S. border officials for passwords to social media accounts will also set a precedent that may ultimately affect all travelers around the world. This demand is likely to be mirrored by foreign governments, which will demand passwords from U.S. citizens when they seek entry to foreign countries. This would compromise U.S. economic security, cybersecurity, and national security, as well as damage the U.S.'s relationships with foreign governments and their citizenry.

Policies to demand passwords as a condition of travel, as well as more general efforts to force individuals to disclose their online activity, including potentially years' worth of private and public communications, create an intense chilling effect on individuals. Freedom of expression and press rights, access to information, rights of association, and religious liberty are all put at risk by these policies.

The first rule of online security is simple: Do not share your passwords. No government agency should undermine security, privacy, and other rights with a blanket policy of demanding passwords from individuals.

### **Organizations and Trade Associations**

11/9 Coalition

Access Now

ACOS Alliance

Advocacy for Principled Action in Government

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

American Civil Liberties Union

American Library Association

American Society of Journalists & Authors

American Society of News Editors

Americans for Immigrant Justice

Association of Alternative Newsmedia  
Association of Research Libraries  
Big Brother Watch  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee/Defending  
Dissent Foundation  
Bolo Bhi  
Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law  
Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los  
Angeles  
Center for Democracy & Technology  
Comic Book Legal Defense Fund  
Committee to Protect Journalists  
Computer & Communications Industry  
Association  
The Constitution Project  
Consumer Action  
Consumer Technology Association  
Council on American-Islamic Relations  
Electronic Frontier Foundation  
Engine  
Free Speech Coalition  
Future of Privacy Forum  
Global Network Initiative  
Human Rights Watch

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee  
Rights  
Immigrant Legal Resource Center  
Index on Censorship  
Internet Association  
Internet Society  
Internews  
Legal Aid Justice Center  
Media Freedom Foundation  
National Coalition Against Censorship  
National Consumers League  
National Hispanic Media Coalition  
New America's Open Technology Institute  
Online Trust Alliance  
Paradigm Initiative  
Pen America  
Project Censored  
Public Citizen  
Reporters Without Borders  
Resilient Communities Program, New America  
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