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
Restore the Fourth
United Church of Christ, OC Inc.
Woodhull Freedom Foundation
World Privacy Forum

Individual Experts
*Institutional affiliations are for identification purposes only.

Ben Adida, VP Engineering, Clever
Sabrineh Ardalan, Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinical Program
Alvaro M. Bedoya, Georgetown University Law Center
Steven M. Bellovin, Columbia University
Matt Bishop, University of California, Davis
Richard A. Boswell, UC Hastings College of the Law
Annemarie Bridy, University of Idaho College of Law
Eric Burger, Georgetown University
L. Jean Camp, Indiana University
Michael W. Carroll, American University Washington College of Law
Stephen Checkoway, University of Illinois at Chicago
Marisa S. Cianciarulo, Chapman University Dale E. Fowler School of Law
Danielle Citron, University of Maryland Carey School of Law
Lorrie Cranor, Carnegie Mellon University
Catherine Crump, UC Berkeley School of Law
Richard Danbury, De Montfort University, United Kingdom
Deven Desai, Georgia Institute of Technology Scheller College of Business
Melanie Dulong de Rosnay, CNRS - Paris Sorbonne, France
Serge Egelman, UC Berkeley and International Computer Science Institute
David Evans, Professor of Computer Science, University of Virginia
Joshua Fairfield, Washington and Lee University School of Law
Stephen Farrell, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Joan Feigenbaum, Yale University
Susan Freiwald, University of San Francisco School of Law
Michael Froomkin, University of Miami School of Law
Eric Goldman, Santa Clara University School of Law
Ellen P. Goodman, Rutgers University Law School
Debora J. Halbert, University of Hawaii, Manoa
Nadia Heninger, University of Pennsylvania
Margaret Hu, Washington and Lee University School of Law
Christian Huitema, Private Octopus Inc.
Alan Hyde, Rutgers University School of Law
Margot E. Kaminski, The Ohio State University Michael E. Moritz College of Law
Daphne Keller, Stanford Law School
Joseph Kiniry, Galois and Free & Fair
Vivek Krishnamurthy, Harvard Law School
Raymond Ku, Case Western Reserve University School of Law
Sapna Kumar, University of Houston Law Center
Molly K. Land, University of Connecticut School of Law
Susan Landau, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Aija Leiponen, Cornell University
Mark A. Lemley, Stanford Law School
David S. Levine, Elon University School of Law
Yvette Joy Liebesman, Saint Louis University School of Law
Nicola Lugasresi, University of Trento Law School, Italy
Rebecca MacKinnon, Director, Ranking Digital Rights at New America
Irina D. Manta, Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University
Morgan Marquis-Boire, Director of Security, First Look Media
M. Isabel Medina, Loyola University New Orleans College of Law
Sascha Meinrath, X-Lab, Penn State University
William Moner, Elon University
Deirdre K. Mulligan, UC Berkeley School of Law
Karen Musalo, UC Hastings College of the Law
Mary Zanolli Natkin, Washington and Lee University School of Law
John Palmer, Pompeu Fabra University, Spain
Kyung Sin Park, Korea University Law School
Aaron Perzanowski, Case Western Reserve University
Chip Pitts, Oxford University
Srividhya Ragavan, Texas A&M School of Law
Blake E. Reid, Colorado Law
Neil Richards, Washington University in St. Louis
Phillip Rogaway, University of California, Davis
Ira Rubinstein, New York University School of Law
Michael L. Rustad, Suffolk University Law School
Patrick S. Ryan, University of Colorado at Boulder
Norman M. Sadeh, Carnegie Mellon University
Pamela Samuelson, UC Berkeley School of Law
Andy Sayler, Information Security Engineer, Twitter
Bruce Schneier, Harvard Kennedy School of Government
Seth Schoen, Electronic Frontier Foundation
Christopher B. Seaman, Washington and Lee University School of Law
Jeffrey Selbin, UC Berkeley School of Law
Wendy Seltzer, World Wide Web Consortium
Elisabeth Semel, UC Berkeley School of Law
Ragini N. Shah, Suffolk University Law School
Micah Sherr, Georgetown University
Adam Shostack, Author, Threat Modeling: Designing for Security
Ted M. Sichelman, University of San Diego School of Law
Megan Squire, Elon University
Katherine J. Strandburg, New York University School of Law
Peter Swire, Georgia Institute of Technology Scheller College of Business
Cynthia Taylor, University of Illinois at Chicago
Judith Townend, University of Sussex, United Kingdom
Samuel Trosow, University of Western Ontario, Canada
Rebecca Tushnet, Georgetown University Law Center
Jennifer M. Urban, UC Berkeley School of Law
Dan Wallach, Rice University
Nicholas Weaver, International Computer Science Institute
Jonathan Weinberg, Wayne State University
Sarah Wiant, Washington and Lee University School of Law
Jennifer Winter, University of Hawaii, Manoa
Elisabeth Wood, Yale University
Nicolo Zingales, University of Sussex Law School, United Kingdom