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COMMERCE, JUSTICE,
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FINANCIAL SERVICES AND
GENERAL GOVERNMENT



TOM GRAVES
9TH DISTRICT, GEORGIA
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
May 25, 2011

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Investigations

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your testimony last month before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Financial Services and General Government. As we discussed, I am deeply concerned by Google's unauthorized collection of private unencrypted WiFi messages.

In May 2010, Google admitted that for three years it had used its Street View mapping process to gather the content of unencrypted consumer WiFi network transmissions. While Google has rightfully admitted that the collection of this information without authorization was a mistake, its executives have repeatedly assured regulators that no harm occurred and that any resulting privacy breach was minimal. But investigations of Google outside of the U.S. have revealed that Google was collecting highly sensitive data that included complete names, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, user names, and passwords.

American consumers have a right to know precisely what transpired when Google collected their WiFi communications. But the details of Google's conduct in the United States have never been fully explained.

Under your leadership, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has initiated an investigation to determine whether any of Google's activities constituted a violation of the Communications Act. I strongly support your decision to conduct this investigation because I believe that the FCC plays an important role in protecting the electronic privacy of the American people. I am concerned, however, that the FCC has not yet shared any of the facts of this case with Congress.

I urge you to complete a full review expeditiously and provide Congress with a thorough report. This information will allow Congress to determine whether legislation action is necessary to prevent such a breach of private information in the future.

Google's conduct has left the American public with more questions than answers. Like their counterparts in other countries, American consumers deserve to know precisely what transpired when Google secretly collected their WiFi communications. They deserve detailed enforcement activity by regulators responsible for policing interceptions of private data. And they deserve action designed to ensure that Google never engages in this or similar conduct again.

Sincerely,

Tom Graves
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

PRINTED NAME OF MEMBER