

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
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COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
ENVIRONMENT AND THE ECONOMY



COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS

JOHN BARROW
12TH DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
May 3, 2012

Mr. Larry Page
Chief Executive Officer
Google Inc.
1600 Amphitheater Parkway
Mountain View, California 94043

Dear Mr. Page:

I'm writing to ask that you address concerns arising out of the recently released, unredacted version of the Federal Communications Commission's Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture ("NAL") in the Google Wi-Fi investigation.

While I credit Google's commitment to innovation and making the consumer's online experience more enriching, I have serious concerns with some of the tactics used, and would like you to weigh in on the FCC's NAL charge that you impeded and delayed their inquiry.

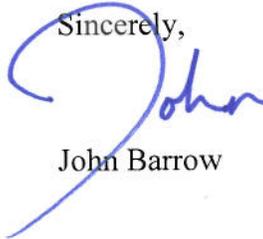
Companies like yours – which are entrusted with very sensitive online data about our private lives – have a responsibility to honor the public's trust by being transparent with consumers and forthcoming with investigators when addressing privacy breach inquiries. It's been nearly two years since the disclosure of Google's interception and collection of consumer data via the Street View program, and American consumers and Congress still haven't received a full account of what happened.

Your company has long claimed that its actions were a mistake. In fact, on June 9, 2010, you reported to the House Commerce Committee – of which I am a member – that you “[r]ecently ... became aware that [you] had mistakenly included code in [your] software that collected samples of ‘payload data’ – information sent over the network – from open (unencrypted) networks.” Again you repeated this statement in written testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, and you made similar claims to the American public on dozens of occasions in blog posts and press statements.

However, the FCC's investigation found that this data collection resulted from a deliberate software design decision by one of the Google employees working on the Street View project, and that this information was shared with the entire Street view team, including a senior manager on the project.

After two years, I believe it's critical that we now have a complete understanding of what happened in this matter. I strongly urge you to be fully cooperative with both the authorities and the public on the Street View program. I look forward to continuing this dialogue with you, and I hope to work with you and Congress to see to it that the American public's concerns over the collection of their private information is sufficiently addressed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John". The signature is stylized with a large, looping initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

John Barrow