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BLOG

Maryland Creates Internet Privacy Unit

FEBRUARY 11, 2013

Maryland Attorney General Doug Gansler recently announced that his office is launching a new "Internet Privacy Unit" to combat online privacy law violations. According to Gansler's press release, the Unit will monitor companies to ensure compliance with state and federal consumer protection laws, including COPPA. The Unit also plans to "examine weaknesses in online privacy policies" and bring enforcement actions for violations of state and federal law. Companies should expect that Maryland will likely focus on privacy issues such as data security breaches, deceptive privacy promises, and insufficient consumer control over personal information. Maryland is following California's lead in creating a dedicated team to investigate and enforce privacy rules. California's privacy unit has already brought a suit against Delta Airlines for its alleged failure to include a privacy policy in its mobile app, a violation of the California Online Privacy Protection Act. As we reported last summer, Gansler—who serves as president of the National Association of Attorneys General—announced that the critical focus of his tenure as president would be "privacy in the digital age."

TIP: States are taking an increased interest in online privacy issues and are becoming more active in bringing cases that used to be solely the domain of the FTC (like those brought for COPPA violations). This announcement serves as another reminder for companies to ensure that they have their privacy houses in order.

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