



Introducing....The Federal Privacy Council!

Insights

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In one of the last Executive Orders of his final term, President Obama on Tuesday established the “Federal Privacy Council”—an “interagency forum to improve the Government privacy practices of agencies and entities acting on their behalf.” Included in the roster of members are the senior agency officials at every major federal agency, including but not limited to the Department of State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, HUD, Transportation, Energy, Education and more. According to the order, the Privacy Council will be responsible for coordinating and implementing best practices and appropriate privacy safeguards and advising the federal government on its privacy practices.

As stated by the President: “The proper functioning of government requires the public’s trust . . . and to maintain that trust the government must strive to uphold the highest standards for collecting, maintaining, and using personal data. Privacy has been at the heart of our government from its inception, and we need it now more than ever.”

Office of Management and Budget Director Shaun Donovan previously announced the council in a keynote speech on December 2. “It’s time to stop re-inventing the privacy wheel at agencies and do a better job of leveraging the success of each agency’s related efforts . . . It is time to shift from reactive programs to proactive strategies. And it is time to ‘professionalize’ the privacy profession.”

While it remains to be seen how the Privacy Council will function or what it will accomplish, the goals behind the council benefit a greater attention to privacy in the United States, which may in turn satisfy European and other international regulators who have long desired stronger privacy protections in the US. And as always, with new agencies created, there is likely to be an impact on employers. Stay tuned.