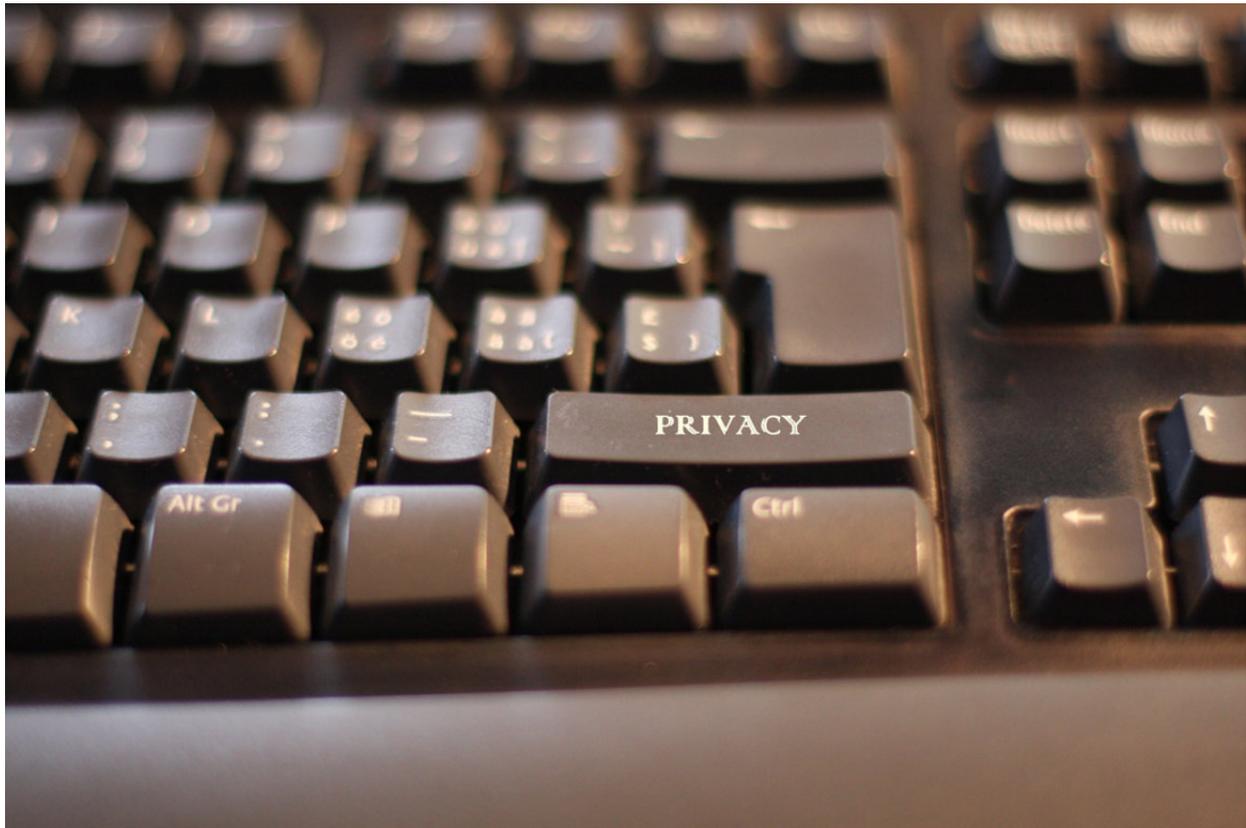


What's New in Civic Tech: U.S. House Approves Email Privacy Protections, Seattle PD Deploys Data Analytics Platform

Zack Quaintance | February 9, 2017



What's New in Civic Tech takes a look at highlights and recent happenings in the world of civic technology.

U.S. House Approves Email, Cloud Privacy Protections

The U.S. House of Representatives has approved the [Email Privacy Act](#), which would require warrants for law enforcement agents to search private emails and data that's been stored for more than six months.

Previously the IRS, FBI and other agencies could review emails that sat in private inboxes for more than 180 days due to the 1986 Electronic Communications Act, which considered such messages abandoned. Agents needed only request copies from email providers. This new legislation would require a court-ordered warrant, regardless of an email's age.

The Email Privacy Act would effectively replace the Electronic Communications Privacy Act, itself a replacement of 1968 Federal Wiretap Act. Past legislation has clarified and updated the 1986 act, but this bill marks the first total overhaul in three decades.

A similar bill unanimously passed through the [House in April 2016](#), but languished in the Senate. Ultimately, the earlier version died after a new Congress was elected in November 2016. This Email Privacy Act was introduced Jan. 9, receiving bipartisan support. The ACLU has also [supported the update](#).

“The level of bipartisan support for this bill is a reflection of the public’s strong belief that the government must respect and protect privacy rights in the digital age,” [said](#) ACLU lawyer Neema Singh Guliani after the House passed the first Email Privacy Act. “Now it’s the Senate’s turn to pass this important bill and strengthen it by including a requirement that the government inform people when it forces companies to turn over their information.”

Seattle PD to Track Use of Force, Officer Performance

The Seattle Police Department has installed a data analytics platform to help track use-of-force incidents amid an ongoing overhaul after a [2011 federal consent decree](#) identified a pattern of excessive force.

This platform, developed by [Accenture](#), will also facilitate better data analysis of police calls, incident reports, interactions with the public, administrative processes, officer training and workforce management. The desired results are a better-informed leadership, data-driven decisions and improved oversight. In building the platform, developers consolidated six info sources already used by the department.

Seattle Chief of Police Kathleen O’Toole said in [a statement](#) that the project had been delivered on time and within budget.

“This integrated platform has improved our ability to track use of force and officer performance across multiple measures,” O’Toole said in the statement. “These analytics not only promote accountability, but also enhance police operations by supporting proper management of personnel—helping SPD officers deliver high-quality policing to the communities they serve.”

Implementation of such a platform is a long time coming. In September 2015, the department [hired Bill Schrier](#), former city of Seattle Chief Technology Officer, as its interim CIO. At that time, Schrier, who has [since joined the First Responder Network Authority](#), discussed the importance of continuing to work toward a data analytics platform, an initiative a predecessor had begun.

This all joins a larger push to assuage concerns raised by the federal consent decree. Chief O’Toole spoke about that at [Harvard University in 2015](#), saying the term she used constantly in relation to the efforts was “collaborative reform.”

NYU’s GovLab Launches Network to Improve Data-Driven Justice Reform

To facilitate better communication among policymakers and practitioners of criminal justice, the Governance Lab at the New York University Tandon School of Engineering has launched the [Data Justice Network](#).

Through this site, the two groups can connect better with each other and colleagues, almost as if it were a social network. The hope is this will create a centralized place

for those involved to benefit from the expertise of others while also sharing their own knowledge, and fostering data analysis and information sharing with the potential to reduce crime and incarceration.

The site was built by [GovLab](#) with support from the Laura and John Arnold Foundation in collaboration with the Justice Management Institute. It was designed by practitioners of criminal justice, with advisers from [Code for America](#), the Pew-MacArthur Results First Initiative, the [National Association of Counties](#) and heads of criminal justice coordinating councils from 22 jurisdictions.

Matt Alsdorf, the Laura and John Arnold Foundation's vice president of criminal justice, emphasized the importance of these connections.

"Criminal justice data are collected by multiple agencies, stored in different formats and maintained in various systems," Alsdorf said in [a statement](#). "The lack of data coordination makes it difficult for jurisdictions to analyze information and evaluate the effect of their local criminal justice policies. We are pleased to support the Data Justice Network and believe that it can help to address this issue and make it easier for communities to use data and predictive analytics to safely reduce their jail populations."

NYC Housing Authority Provides Wi-Fi to More Residents

A community Wi-Fi network is expanding within Queensbridge Houses in Long Island, N.Y., powered by a partnership between [Spot On Networks](#) and the New York City Housing Authority.

Dubbed the Queensbridge Connected WiFi Network, upon completion this effort will be the largest affordable housing community Wi-Fi network in the United States, providing access to Wi-Fi to 26 clusters of 95 buildings in two complexes. On Feb. 8, the network was extended to Queensbridge Houses Block E. In December 2016, it was added to Block F, where it has so far seen more than 2,300 unique client devices per week, passing more than 5.2 terabytes of data.

A team from Spot On Networks is currently building out and testing capabilities for the remaining blocks within the housing complex. The company has also opened an on-site center for support for residents who prefer in-person help. Spot On Networks has also hired Queensbridge residents as part of its full-time and part-time staff.

This network offers speeds up to 25 Mbps, unlimited data usage, Wi-Fi calling capability and roaming. The goal of providing Queensbridge residents with connectivity is to foster access to educational and employment resources.

DataRescue SF Bay Event Works to Preserve Publicly Accessible Data Resources

To help preserve publicly accessible federal data resources, an event Saturday, Feb. 11 will bring together programmers, scientists, archivists and volunteers at the University of California, Berkeley.

DataRescue SF Bay is part of a [national series of such gatherings](#) organized by [DataRefuge](#), a public collaborative project designed to address [a host of concerns](#)

about federal climate data, including what are the best ways to safeguard data, how do government priorities impact data's accessibility, and which projects and research fields depend on federal data.

An enticement for the event on its website is a fitting one — “Join us for a day of civic technology and citizen archiving, at a time when scientific research in the public interest is increasingly at risk” — as concerns have risen throughout the scientific community about President Trump's statements regarding the validity of climate change research and policies.

The main location of this event is the Berkeley Institute for Data Science, inside Doe Memorial Library on the UC Berkeley campus. The event is slated to begin at 9 a.m. and run through 5 p.m. In addition to being part of the DataRefuge project, the event is taking place in partnership with the [Environmental Data and Governance Initiative](#) and the [End of Term Presidential Harvest from the Internet Archive](#).

Similar upcoming events are slated to take place in Boston; Washington, D.C.; and New Haven, Conn. Recent past events in this series have happened in Austin, Texas; Toronto; Chicago; and Los Angeles.

<http://www.govtech.com/civic/Whats-New-in-Civic-Tech-02092017.html>