PROTECTING AMERICANS' PRIVACY

The Internet has helped bring about many amazing changes in our daily lives during the past decade, but—to paraphrase Al Jolson—we ain't seen nothin' yet.

Among other things, we can look forward to an exciting new era of anywhere access. Valued information, contacts and media content will be available instantly and easily, no matter where we are. First, however, we need technology and business processes that are always secure, so we can be confident that our identity and privacy are protected.

A lot of progress has been made in this direction, but there is still much work to do. In the United States last year, security breaches exposed the personal information of more than 100 million people. Almost half of the fraud complaints filed with the Federal Trade Commission in 2005 were Internet related.

Ensuring Americans' online security is a broad, societal challenge. Viruses and other malware target software from virtually every vendor, and every business is vulnerable to the risks that come with unauthorized access to corporate information.

Five years ago, Microsoft put security, privacy and reliability—what we call Trustworthy Computing—at the center of our efforts. The newly released Windows Vista and 2007 Microsoft Office system were designed to be fundamentally more secure and to provide people with significantly more control over their information.

Microsoft also works closely with governments, non-profit organizations and industry partners to educate consumers about online safety. We collaborate on industry-wide standards that will enable people to access digital information more securely, no matter where they are or what device they have at hand. And we assist law enforcement in fighting Internet-related crime.

On the legal front, we at Microsoft believe the United States needs an all-inclusive, uniform privacy law that will give consumers more control over their personal data and more reason for confidence in providing information to legitimate businesses and other organizations. With the flow of information becoming increasingly global, we also see a growing need to align U.S. law with current and emerging privacy standards in the rest of the world.

The United States needs a uniform privacy law in order to realize the full benefits of advances in technology.

We have joined with other industry and public-interest leaders—including eBay, HP and the Center for Democracy & Technology—in supporting federal privacy legislation that:
• Provides people with meaningful control over the use and disclosure of personal information;
• Increases transparency regarding collection, use and disclosure of personal information; and
• Includes strict security requirements for storage and transit of personal information, and rules for when there is a breach.

We urge Congress to act on comprehensive privacy legislation this year. Action is needed to keep America at the forefront of the amazing changes and great benefits still to come, as technology continues to advance.

Learn more at microsoft.com/issues.