

EPIC Will Oppose Google's Acquisition of Fitbit

Marc Rotenberg
EPIC President
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“EPIC intends to oppose Google’s planned acquisition of Fitbit. We do not believe that this deal should be approved.

“First, Fitbit gathers sensitive personal data that should not be transferred to others. Last year, the Department of Defense prohibited military personnel from using geolocation features on their fitness devices because of privacy and security concerns.

“Second, there is no reason to trust Google’s assurances about privacy protection. Google routinely breaks its commitments and conceals its tracking capabilities. Earlier this year, Google admitted it built a hidden microphone in the Nest alarm system. The Google Home Mini was released with the device set to always record. These stories go back more than a decade.

“Third, innovation emerges from competition, not acquisition. If Google wants to sell a fitness device, it should devote its considerable expertise and resources to developing a better product than Fitbit.

“FTC Chairman Simons and Assistant Attorney General Delrahim have stated that the tech industry needs greater scrutiny. They have also said that bad deals should not be approved. The Google-Fitbit deal is a test of their commitment to competition, innovation, and data protection.

“EPIC opposed Google’s acquisition of Doubleclick and YouTube, warned about Google’s acquisition of Nest and Deepmind, and urged the FTC to unwind the Facebook-WhatsApp deal. Several of these deals are now being reconsidered by antitrust authorities.

“EPIC also sued the FTC over its failure to enforce the consent order against Google, EPIC v. FTC (2012), and EPIC has moved to intervene in the pending settlement with Facebook because the Commission failed to safeguard the privacy interests of consumers.

“EPIC is prepared to take whatever steps are necessary to ensure the protection of consumer privacy. We look forward to working with others who are concerned about the growing concentration of consumer services among the tech giants.

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