

115TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1899

To ensure the digital contents of electronic equipment and online accounts belonging to or in the possession of United States persons entering or exiting the United States are adequately protected at the border, and for other purposes.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 4, 2017

Mr. POLIS (for himself, Mr. FARENTHOLD, Mr. SMITH of Washington, and Mr. BEYER) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committee on Homeland Security, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

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## A BILL

To ensure the digital contents of electronic equipment and online accounts belonging to or in the possession of United States persons entering or exiting the United States are adequately protected at the border, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Protecting Data at  
5 the Border Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress finds the following:

3 (1) United States persons have a reasonable ex-  
4 pectation of privacy in the digital contents of their  
5 electronic equipment, the digital contents of their  
6 online accounts, and the nature of their online pres-  
7 ence.

8 (2) The Supreme Court of the United States  
9 recognized in *Riley v. California*, 134 S. Ct. 2473  
10 (2014) the extraordinary privacy interests in elec-  
11 tronic equipment like cell phones.

12 (3) The privacy interest of United States per-  
13 sons in the digital contents of their electronic equip-  
14 ment, the digital contents of their online accounts,  
15 and the nature of their online presence differs in  
16 both degree and kind from their privacy interest in  
17 closed containers.

18 (4) Accessing the digital contents of electronic  
19 equipment, accessing the digital contents of an on-  
20 line account, or obtaining information regarding the  
21 nature of the online presence of a United States per-  
22 son entering or exiting the United States, without a  
23 lawful warrant based on probable cause, is unreason-  
24 able under the Fourth Amendment to the Constitu-  
25 tion of the United States.

1 **SEC. 3. SCOPE.**

2 Nothing in this Act shall be construed to—

3 (1) prohibit a Governmental entity from con-  
4 ducting an inspection of the external physical com-  
5 ponents of the electronic equipment to determine the  
6 presence or absence of weapons or contraband with-  
7 out a warrant, including activating or attempting to  
8 activate an object that appears to be electronic  
9 equipment to verify that the object is electronic  
10 equipment; or

11 (2) limit the authority of a Governmental entity  
12 under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of  
13 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801 et seq.).

14 **SEC. 4. DEFINITIONS.**

15 As used in this Act—

16 (1) the term “access credential” includes a  
17 username, password, PIN number, fingerprint, or bi-  
18 ometric indicator;

19 (2) the term “border” means the international  
20 border of the United States and the functional  
21 equivalent of such border;

22 (3) the term “digital contents” means any  
23 signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or in-  
24 telligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in  
25 part by electronic equipment, or stored in electronic  
26 equipment or an online account;

1           (4) the term “electronic communication service”  
2           has the meaning given that term in section 2510 of  
3           title 18, United States Code;

4           (5) the term “electronic equipment” has the  
5           meaning given the term “computer” in section  
6           1030(e) of title 18, United States Code;

7           (6) the term “Governmental entity” means a  
8           department or agency of the United States (includ-  
9           ing any officer, employee, or contractor or other  
10          agent thereof);

11          (7) the term “online account” means an online  
12          account with an electronic communication service or  
13          remote computing service;

14          (8) the term “online account information”  
15          means the screen name or other identifier or infor-  
16          mation that would allow a Governmental entity to  
17          identify the online presence of an individual;

18          (9) the term “remote computing service” has  
19          the meaning given that term in section 2711 of title  
20          18, United States Code; and

21          (10) the term “United States person” means an  
22          individual who is a United States person, as defined  
23          in section 101 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveil-  
24          lance Act of 1978 (50 U.S.C. 1801).

1 **SEC. 5. PROCEDURES FOR LAWFUL ACCESS TO DIGITAL**  
2 **DATA AT THE BORDER.**

3 (a) STANDARD.—Subject to subsection (b), a Govern-  
4 mental entity may not—

5 (1) access the digital contents of any electronic  
6 equipment belonging to or in the possession of a  
7 United States person at the border without a valid  
8 warrant supported by probable cause issued using  
9 the procedures described in the Federal Rules of  
10 Criminal Procedure by a court of competent jurisdic-  
11 tion;

12 (2) deny entry into or exit from the United  
13 States by a United States person based on a refusal  
14 by the United States person to—

15 (A) disclose an access credential that  
16 would enable access to the digital contents of  
17 electronic equipment or the digital contents of  
18 an online account;

19 (B) provide access to the digital contents  
20 of electronic equipment or the digital contents  
21 of an online account; or

22 (C) provide online account information; or

23 (3) delay entry into or exit from the United  
24 States by a United States person for longer than the  
25 period of time, which may not exceed 4 hours, nec-  
26 essary to determine whether the United States per-

1 son will, in a manner in accordance with subsection  
2 (c), consensually provide an access credential, ac-  
3 cess, or online account information, as described in  
4 subparagraphs (A), (B), and (C) of paragraph (2).

5 (b) EMERGENCY EXCEPTIONS.—

6 (1) EMERGENCY SITUATIONS GENERALLY.—

7 (A) IN GENERAL.—An investigative or law  
8 enforcement officer of a Governmental entity  
9 who is designated by the Secretary of Home-  
10 land Security for purposes of this paragraph  
11 may access the digital contents of electronic  
12 equipment belonging to or in possession of a  
13 United States person at the border without a  
14 warrant described in subsection (a)(1) if the in-  
15 vestigative or law enforcement officer—

16 (i) reasonably determines that—

17 (I) an emergency situation exists  
18 that involves—

19 (aa) immediate danger of  
20 death or serious physical injury  
21 to any person;

22 (bb) conspiratorial activities  
23 threatening the national security  
24 interest of the United States; or

1 (cc) conspiratorial activities  
2 characteristic of organized crime;

3 (II) the emergency situation de-  
4 scribed in subclause (I) requires ac-  
5 cess to the digital contents of the elec-  
6 tronic equipment before a warrant de-  
7 scribed in subsection (a)(1) author-  
8 izing such access can, with due dili-  
9 gence, be obtained; and

10 (III) there are grounds upon  
11 which a warrant described in sub-  
12 section (a)(1) could be issued author-  
13 izing such access; and

14 (ii) makes an application in accord-  
15 ance with this section for a warrant de-  
16 scribed in subsection (a)(1) as soon as  
17 practicable, but not later than 7 days after  
18 the investigative or law enforcement officer  
19 accesses the digital contents under the au-  
20 thority under this subparagraph.

21 (B) WARRANT NOT OBTAINED.—If an ap-  
22 plication for a warrant described in subpara-  
23 graph (A)(ii) is denied, or in any other case in  
24 which an investigative or law enforcement offi-  
25 cer accesses the digital contents of electronic

1 equipment belonging to or in possession of a  
2 United States person at the border without a  
3 warrant under the emergency authority under  
4 subparagraph (A) and a warrant authorizing  
5 the access is not obtained—

6 (i) any copy of the digital contents in  
7 the custody or control of a Governmental  
8 entity shall immediately be destroyed;

9 (ii) the digital contents, and any in-  
10 formation derived from the digital con-  
11 tents, may not be disclosed to any Govern-  
12 mental entity or a State or local govern-  
13 ment; and

14 (iii) the Governmental entity employ-  
15 ing the investigative or law enforcement of-  
16 ficer that accessed the digital contents  
17 shall notify the United States person that  
18 any copy of the digital contents has been  
19 destroyed.

20 (2) PROTECTION OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND  
21 HEALTH.—A Governmental entity may access the  
22 digital contents of electronic equipment belonging to  
23 or in possession of a United States person at the  
24 border without a warrant described in subsection  
25 (a)(1) if the access is—



1 (A) necessary for the provision of fire,  
2 medical, public safety, or other emergency serv-  
3 ices; and

4 (B) unrelated to the investigation of a pos-  
5 sible crime or other violation of the law.

6 (c) INFORMED CONSENT IN WRITING.—

7 (1) NOTICE.—

8 (A) IN GENERAL.—A Governmental entity  
9 shall provide the notice described in subpara-  
10 graph (B) before requesting that a United  
11 States person at the border—

12 (i) provide consent to access the dig-  
13 ital contents of any electronic equipment  
14 belonging to or in the possession of or the  
15 digital contents of an online account of the  
16 United States person;

17 (ii) disclose an access credential that  
18 would enable access to the digital contents  
19 of electronic equipment or the digital con-  
20 tents of an online account of the United  
21 States Person;

22 (iii) provide access to the digital con-  
23 tents of electronic equipment or the digital  
24 contents of an online account of the United  
25 States Person; or

1 (iv) provide online account informa-  
2 tion of the United States Person.

3 (B) CONTENTS.—The notice described in  
4 this subparagraph is written notice in a lan-  
5 guage understood by the United States person  
6 that the Governmental entity—

7 (i) may not—

8 (I) compel access to the digital  
9 contents of electronic equipment be-  
10 longing to or in the possession of, the  
11 digital contents of an online account  
12 of, or the online account information  
13 of a United States person without a  
14 valid warrant;

15 (II) deny entry into or exit from  
16 the United States by the United  
17 States person based on a refusal by  
18 the United States person to—

19 (aa) disclose an access cre-  
20 dential that would enable access  
21 to the digital contents of elec-  
22 tronic equipment or the digital  
23 contents of an online account;

24 (bb) provide access to the  
25 digital contents of electronic

1 equipment or the digital contents  
2 of an online account; or  
3 (cc) provide online account  
4 information; or  
5 (III) delay entry into or exit from  
6 the United States by the United  
7 States person for longer than the pe-  
8 riod of time, which may not exceed 4  
9 hours, necessary to determine whether  
10 the United States person will consen-  
11 sually provide an access credential, ac-  
12 cess, or online account information, as  
13 described in items (aa), (bb), and (cc)  
14 of subclause (II); and  
15 (ii) if the Governmental entity has  
16 probable cause that the electronic equip-  
17 ment contains information that is relevant  
18 to an allegation that the United States  
19 person has committed a felony, may seize  
20 electronic equipment belonging to or in the  
21 possession of the United States person for  
22 a period of time if the United States per-  
23 son refuses to consensually provide access  
24 to the digital contents of the electronic  
25 equipment.

1 (2) CONSENT.—

2 (A) IN GENERAL.—A Governmental entity  
3 shall obtain written consent described in sub-  
4 paragraph (B) before—

5 (i) accessing, pursuant to the consent  
6 of a United States person at the border  
7 the digital contents of electronic equipment  
8 belonging to or in the possession of or the  
9 digital contents of an online account of the  
10 United States person;

11 (ii) obtaining, pursuant to the consent  
12 of a United States person at the border, an  
13 access credential of the United States per-  
14 son that would enable access to the digital  
15 contents of electronic equipment or the  
16 digital contents of an online account; or

17 (iii) obtaining, pursuant to the con-  
18 sent of a United States person at the bor-  
19 der, online account information for an on-  
20 line account of the United States person.

21 (B) CONTENTS OF WRITTEN CONSENT.—

22 Written consent described in this subparagraph  
23 is written consent that—

1 (i) indicates the United States person  
2 understands the protections and limitations  
3 described in paragraph (1)(B);

4 (ii) states the United States person  
5 is—

6 (I) providing consent to the Gov-  
7 ernmental entity to access certain dig-  
8 ital contents or consensually disclosing  
9 an access credential; or

10 (II) consensually providing online  
11 account information; and

12 (iii) specifies the digital contents, ac-  
13 cess credential, or online account informa-  
14 tion with respect to which the United  
15 States person is providing consent.

16 (d) RETENTION OF DIGITAL CONTENTS.—

17 (1) LAWFUL ACCESS.—A Governmental entity  
18 that obtains access to the digital contents of elec-  
19 tronic equipment, the digital contents of an online  
20 account, or online account information in accordance  
21 with this section may not make or retain a copy of  
22 the digital contents or online account information, or  
23 any information directly or indirectly derived from  
24 the digital contents or online account information,  
25 unless there is probable cause to believe the digital

1 contents or online account information contains evi-  
2 dence of, or constitutes the fruits of, a crime.

3 (2) UNLAWFUL ACCESS.—If a Governmental  
4 entity obtains access to the digital contents of elec-  
5 tronic equipment, digital contents of an online ac-  
6 count, or online account information in a manner  
7 that is not in accordance with this section, the Gov-  
8 ernmental entity—

9 (A) shall immediately destroy any copy of  
10 the digital contents or online account informa-  
11 tion, and any information directly or indirectly  
12 derived from the digital contents or online ac-  
13 count information, in the custody or control of  
14 the Governmental entity;

15 (B) may not disclose the digital contents  
16 or online account information, or any informa-  
17 tion directly or indirectly derived from the dig-  
18 ital contents or online account information, to  
19 any other Governmental entity or a State or  
20 local government; and

21 (C) shall notify the United States person  
22 that any copy of the digital contents or online  
23 account information, and any information di-  
24 rectly or indirectly derived from the digital con-

1           tents or online account information, has been  
2           destroyed.

3           (e) RECORDKEEPING.—A Governmental entity shall  
4 keep a record of each instance in which the Governmental  
5 entity obtains access to the digital contents of electronic  
6 equipment belonging to or in the possession of an indi-  
7 vidual at the border, the digital contents of an online ac-  
8 count of an individual who is at the border, or online ac-  
9 count information of an individual who is at the border,  
10 which shall include—

11           (1) the reason for the access;

12           (2) the nationality, immigration status, and ad-  
13 mission category of the individual;

14           (3) the nature and extent of the access;

15           (4) if the access was consensual, how and to  
16 what the individual consented, and what the indi-  
17 vidual provided by consent;

18           (5) whether electronic equipment of the indi-  
19 vidual was seized;

20           (6) whether the Governmental entity made a  
21 copy of all or a portion of the digital contents or on-  
22 line account information, or any information directly  
23 or indirectly derived from the digital contents or on-  
24 line account information; and

1           (7) whether the digital contents or online ac-  
2           count information, or any information directly or in-  
3           directly derived from the digital contents or online  
4           account information, was shared with another Gov-  
5           ernmental entity or a State or local government.

6 **SEC. 6. LIMITS ON USE OF DIGITAL CONTENTS AS EVI-**  
7 **DENCE.**

8           (a) **IN GENERAL.**—Whenever any digital contents or  
9           online account information have been obtained in violation  
10          of this Act, no part of the digital contents or online ac-  
11          count information and no evidence derived therefrom may  
12          be received in evidence in any trial, hearing, or other pro-  
13          ceeding (including any proceeding relating to the immigra-  
14          tion laws, as defined in section 101(a) of the Immigration  
15          and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1101(a))) in or before any  
16          court, grand jury, department, officer, agency, regulatory  
17          body, legislative committee, or other authority of the  
18          United States, a State, or a political subdivision thereof.

19          (b) **APPLICATION.**—To the maximum extent prac-  
20          ticable, the limitations under subsection (a) shall be ap-  
21          plied in the same manner as the limitations under section  
22          2515 of title 18, United States Code.

23 **SEC. 7. LIMITS ON SEIZURE OF ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT.**

24          A Governmental entity may not seize any electronic  
25          equipment belonging to or in the possession of a United



1 States person at the border unless there is probable cause  
2 to believe that the electronic equipment contains informa-  
3 tion that is relevant to an allegation that the United  
4 States person has committed a felony.

5 **SEC. 8. AUDIT AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**

6 In March of each year, the Secretary of Homeland  
7 Security shall submit to Congress and make publicly avail-  
8 able on the Web site of the Department of Homeland Se-  
9 curity a report that includes the following:

10 (1) The number of times during the previous  
11 year that an officer or employee of the Department  
12 of Homeland Security did each of the following:

13 (A) Accessed the digital contents of any  
14 electronic equipment belonging to or in the pos-  
15 session of or the digital contents of an online  
16 account of a United States person at the border  
17 pursuant to a warrant supported by probable  
18 cause issued using the procedures described in  
19 the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure by a  
20 court of competent jurisdiction.

21 (B) Accessed the digital contents of any  
22 electronic equipment belonging to or in the pos-  
23 session of a United States person at the border  
24 pursuant to the emergency authority under sec-  
25 tion 5(b).

1           (C) Requested consent to access the digital  
2 contents of any electronic equipment belonging  
3 to or in the possession of, the digital contents  
4 of an online account of, or online account infor-  
5 mation of a United States person at the border.

6           (D) Accessed the digital contents of any  
7 electronic equipment belonging to or in the pos-  
8 session of, the digital contents of an online ac-  
9 count of, or online account information of a  
10 United States person at the border pursuant to  
11 written consent provided in accordance with  
12 section 5(c).

13           (E) Requested a United States person at  
14 the border consensually disclose an access cre-  
15 dential that would enable access to the digital  
16 contents of electronic equipment or the digital  
17 contents of an online account of the United  
18 States person.

19           (F) Accessed the digital contents of elec-  
20 tronic equipment or the digital contents of an  
21 online account of a United States person at the  
22 border using an access credential pursuant to  
23 written consent provided in accordance with  
24 section 5(c).

1           (G) Accessed the digital contents of any  
2           electronic equipment belonging to or in the pos-  
3           session of, the digital contents of an online ac-  
4           count of, or online account information of a  
5           United States person at the border in a manner  
6           that was not in accordance with section 5.

7           (H) Accessed the digital contents of any  
8           electronic equipment belonging to or in the pos-  
9           session of, the digital contents of an online ac-  
10          count of, or online account information of an  
11          individual who is not a United States person at  
12          the border.

13          (I) Accessed the digital contents of any  
14          electronic equipment belonging to or in the pos-  
15          session of an individual at the border, the dig-  
16          ital contents of an online account of an indi-  
17          vidual at the border, or online account informa-  
18          tion of an individual at the border (regardless  
19          of whether the individual is a United States  
20          person) at the request of a Governmental entity  
21          (including another component of the Depart-  
22          ment of Homeland Security) that is not the  
23          Governmental entity employing the individual  
24          accessing the digital contents or online account  
25          information.

1 (2) Aggregate data on—

2 (A) the number of United States persons  
3 for which a Governmental entity obtains access  
4 to—

5 (i) the digital contents of electronic  
6 equipment belonging to or in the posses-  
7 sion of the United States person at the  
8 border;

9 (ii) the digital contents of an online  
10 account of the United States person while  
11 at the border; or

12 (iii) online account information of the  
13 United States person while at the border;

14 (B) the country from which United States  
15 persons departed most recently before arriving  
16 in the United States for the United States per-  
17 sons for which a Governmental entity obtains  
18 access to—

19 (i) the digital contents of electronic  
20 equipment belonging to or in the posses-  
21 sion of the United States person at the  
22 border;

23 (ii) the digital contents of an online  
24 account of the United States person while  
25 at the border; or

1 (iii) online account information of the  
2 United States person while at the border;

3 (C) the number and nationality of individ-  
4 uals who are not United States persons for  
5 which a Governmental entity obtains access  
6 to—

7 (i) the digital contents of electronic  
8 equipment belonging to or in the posses-  
9 sion of the individuals at the border;

10 (ii) the digital contents of an online  
11 account of the individuals while at the bor-  
12 der; or

13 (iii) online account information of the  
14 individuals while at the border; and

15 (D) the country from which individuals  
16 who are not United States persons departed  
17 most recently before arriving in the United  
18 States for the individuals for which a Govern-  
19 mental entity obtains access to—

20 (i) the digital contents of electronic  
21 equipment belonging to or in the posses-  
22 sion of the individuals at the border;

23 (ii) the digital contents of an online  
24 account of the individuals while at the bor-  
25 der; or

1 (iii) online account information of the  
2 individuals while at the border.

3 (3) Aggregate data regarding the perceived race  
4 and ethnicity of individuals for whom Governmental  
5 entity obtains access to—

6 (A) the digital contents of electronic equip-  
7 ment belonging to or in the possession of the  
8 individuals at the border;

9 (B) the digital contents of an online ac-  
10 count of the individuals while at the border; or

11 (C) online account information of the indi-  
12 viduals while at the border.

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