

Steve Marshall  
Alabama Attorney General



November 14, 2022

For **press** inquiries only, contact:

Mike Lewis (334) 353-2199

Cameron Mixon (334) 242-7491

Page 1 of 2

## Attorney General Steve Marshall Announces 40-State Settlement with Google to Protect Consumer Location Privacy

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Steve Marshall announced Alabama, along with 39 other states, has reached a \$391.5 million multistate settlement with Google over its location tracking practices relating to Google Account settings. This is the largest multistate Attorney General privacy settlement. Alabama will receive \$7.6 million from the settlement.

“Google bases its business upon the collection of personal data, including location tracking,” said Attorney General Marshall. “Google uses the personal and behavioral data it collects to build detailed user profiles and target ads on behalf of its advertising customers. Location data is among the most sensitive and valuable information Google collects. Even a limited amount of location data can expose a person’s identity and routines and can be used to infer personal details. Unfortunately, until now, the tech giant has failed to adequately safeguard user location privacy.

“As a result of our multistate settlement, Google will be required to allow users to have more control of their own information, to easily turn on or off tracking or sharing, and Google must make their account settings more accessible, transparent, and understandable. They must provide links to clear and understandable information, and they must end any sharing of precise location data with third parties without express consent of the user. This historic settlement is an important milestone in restoring consumer online privacy.”

The attorneys general opened the Google investigation following a 2018 *Associated Press* article that revealed Google “records your movements even when you explicitly tell it not to.” The article focused on two Google account settings: Location History and Web & App Activity. Location History is “off” unless a user turns on the setting, but Web & App Activity, a separate account setting, is automatically “on” when users set up a Google account, including all Android phone users.

As detailed in the settlement, the attorneys general found that Google violated state consumer protection laws by misleading consumers about its location tracking practices since at least 2014. Specifically, Google caused users to be confused about the scope of the Location History setting, the fact that the Web & App Activity setting existed and also collected location information, and the extent to which consumers who use Google products and services could limit Google’s location tracking by adjusting their account and device settings.

--more--



The settlement requires Google to be more transparent with consumers about its practices. Google must:

- Show additional information to users whenever they turn a location-related account setting “on” or “off;”
- Make key information about location tracking unavoidable for users (i.e., not hidden); and,
- Give users detailed information about the types of location data Google collects and how it’s used at an enhanced “Location Technologies” webpage.

The settlement also limits Google’s use and storage of certain types of location information and requires Google account controls to be more user-friendly.

Alabama was joined by attorneys general of Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.