



June 1, 2011

FLOOR ALERT

Re: SB 242 – Privacy Protection for Users of Internet Social Networking Websites

Common Sense Media supports Senate Bill (SB) 242 by Senate Majority Leader Ellen Corbett. SB 242 protects the privacy of social networking website users by enacting several common sense provisions to give users more control over and information about their personal identifying information. This is especially important for kids and families.

Digital life can bring a number of benefits. Social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter allow users to connect with family and friends, and consume, create, and share enormous amounts of content and information. Thanks to mobile technology, this sharing can now happen on the go, and can include information like location. But digital life can also bring significant downsides – especially for kids and teens.

One of the biggest risks related to social networking and technology involves our privacy – especially when our personal identifying information is indiscriminately posted, indefinitely stored, and quietly collected and analyzed by marketers and identity thieves. Those risks are especially serious when it comes to kids and teens, who are often tracked more than adults.* Regardless of the platforms we use, our personal information belongs to us. It is not a commodity to be controlled and traded by websites. The public is concerned about these issues, particularly where kids and teens are involved. According to a recent Common Sense Media poll**:

- 85 percent of parents say they are more concerned about online privacy than they were five years ago.
- 75 percent of parents don't think social networking sites do a good job of protecting children's online privacy.
- 94 percent of parents – and 92% of teens – say they should be able to request the deletion of all their personal information held by a search engine, social network, or marketing company after a specific time period.

SB 242 is an important step forward in ensuring the privacy rights of social network users, and it has important implications for kids and their families. Common Sense Media supports this bill, which would empower internet users with more information and more control over how their personal information is being used and displayed.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Steyer".

James P. Steyer
CEO, Common Sense Media

**The Wall Street Journal* found that 4,123 tracking cookies and other pieces of tracking technology were installed on a test computer that was used to visit the top 50 websites for children and teens – 30% more than a *Journal* test of the top 50 overall sites, which are generally aimed at adults (2010).

**Common Sense Media/Zogby International, Oct. 2010