

For Immediate Release

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Google Stockholders Voting on Privacy Shareholder Proposal
Investors Seek Stronger Controls on Behavioral Advertising Data

SAN FRANCISCO, May 10, 2010—Three months after Google angered many users over privacy breaches allowed by its new Buzz social networking service, Google shareholders will vote on a stockholder proposal asking the company to strengthen its privacy policies. A proposal filed by As You Sow Foundation seeks stronger and more transparent policies to protect web users from privacy concerns raised by behavioral advertising.

The proposal will be voted on at the company's annual meeting Thursday, May 13.

Google has been criticized for not providing sufficient detail on how it protects consumers from potential misuse of massive amounts of data it routinely gathers on hundreds of millions of web users to provide targeted ads.

“Privacy advocates say use of data on health, financial condition, age, sexual orientation and other personal attributes can be inferred from online tracking and used to target vulnerable consumers, including children, who may lack the capacity to evaluate ads,” said Conrad MacKerron, Senior Program Director at As You Sow. “Google says it doesn't present ads based on these sensitive categories but hasn't said where or how it draws a line in such areas.”

Further, it is unclear if Google sells or shares data streams with partner advertising firms and whether those third parties follow the same procedures as Google in regard to data collection, storage, retention and protection.

A report on behavioral advertising by the Center for Democracy and Technology in December 2009 concluded that industry self-regulation is inadequate and said the online advertising industry has “historically failed to fully implement its self-regulatory principles.” Both Congress and the Federal Trade Commission are contemplating stronger privacy safeguards.

“The Buzz release showed consumer privacy was not a top priority in new product development. Google needs to review all of its privacy policies and be more forthcoming about how it is protecting customer data from potential misuse,” said MacKerron.

In its proxy statement, Google acknowledges the validity of the As You Sow privacy proposal, stating “We agree with the proponent that the practice of behavioral advertising raises important privacy issues.”

More information on the stockholder proposal is available [here](#).

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As You Sow is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting corporate accountability, social justice, and environmental protection. Its Corporate Social Responsibility Program is one of the nation's leading proponents of shareholder advocacy and provides shareholder dialogue, resolution, and solicitation management services to the nonprofit, socially responsible investment, and foundation communities.