

Testimony of Robin Mercier Kuc of New Haven, Connecticut, in support of  
H.B. No. 7392 - AN ACT CONCERNING VOTER PRIVACY.

GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING  
MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2019  
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING  
11:00 AM Room 2A

Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Fox, Vice Chair Haskell, Vice Chair Winkler, Ranking Member Sampson, Ranking Member France, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee, for the record my name is ***Robin Mercier Kuc of New Haven, Connecticut***, and I am offering this testimony in support of [HB 7392](#).

Thank you for holding this public hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony today.

Beginning four years ago, I have lobbied various state legislators on behalf of voter data privacy, after discovering my personal data had been published online. During this period I've learned of the belief among some officials that personal data privacy is incompatible with the concept of transparency. Nothing could be further from the truth. It has been shown repeatedly by the Secretary of the State's Office that there are ample alternative means of data verification and checking that do not involve Internet posting of personal data. The State's goals should be accuracy and accountability in the administration of voting, not the pretense of purported transparency – merely for transparency's sake. Flooding the Internet with personal identity data may create the illusion of transparency, but the reality involves much more – such as guaranteeing that the appropriate fact-checkers and officials have access to and constantly monitor voter data and make corrections.

Current law (Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act) allowing for the sale and Internet posting of personal voter identity data is based on the idea that "transparency" means all data needs to be "public". What, exactly, constitutes the definition of "public" in the Internet era? Are there no limits to what must be posted on the Internet? The State of Connecticut currently permits the posting of voter identity data *against the will* of thousands of voters. Today it is voter identity data – tomorrow perhaps tax returns (as is done in Norway), health information, or even DNA records? The time has come to establish the limit of what the State of Connecticut can do with our personal identity data.

We must first grapple with the notion of who "owns" our identity data. The combination of a voter's name, age, address, and party is absolutely unique to that person. It is part of that person's identity as a human being and should not be controlled by the State. We, as voters, grant the State the right to *use* our data for the purposes of voting and administration of voting and elections, not for posting on the Internet, which is essentially the same as *delivering* it to all smart phones and computers in the world.

It has been stated that all data is public these days anyway, because of the Internet. This is a false premise. It is actually quite possible to remove data from search results and many people do. It *is* possible (with some effort) to control one's online presence. However, the privately owned (and unmonitored) online database of Connecticut voters does not allow for removal of data, thus snatching control of identity data from the voter and placing it into the hands of unscrupulous website owners who use the data for their personal enrichment, no matter the consequence or harm done to individual citizens.

MIT Professor Tim Berners-Lee is the person who invented the World Wide Web, enabling the Internet as we know it today. He spoke just recently on this very topic at CERN in Switzerland and was quoted in [Yahoo News](#) as saying, "You should have complete control of your data. It's not oil. It's not a commodity," ... and when it comes to personal data, "you should not be able to sell it for money because it's a right."

In other words, my data represents my identity as a unique human being and therefore the State should not be able to sell it for placement online *against my will*. This represents an infringement of my right to privacy.

Why is this important?

This is crucially important because various forms of discrimination (e.g. age and party) are facilitated and empowered by gaining access to identity data. This insidious form of discrimination represents the *weaponization of identity data*. This weaponization is empowered by the State of Connecticut through its misguided laws, which neglect to take into account that the Internet Age has created new complexities regarding human rights.

The workplace is changing. These days, people are often working as independent contractors (like me), participating in what has become known as the “gig economy”, and therefore perennially in the job “market”. Others working in traditional companies may change jobs much more often than in former eras. Women, in particular, might need or desire to re-enter the job market later in life after raising children. And many others, sadly, have become involuntary job-seekers because of layoffs. Very often these are over-fifty tech or STEM professionals who are the targets of age discrimination. These employees must either find new jobs (as “older” workers) or re-train and enter entirely new fields later in life.

The last-mentioned are workers who are being victimized *twice* – initially by their discriminatory employers and then by the State of Connecticut, which is handicapping their new job searches by allowing their ages to be posted online. If you think age discrimination does not exist simply because there is a law against it, think again. Age discrimination, in both overt and veiled forms, is rampant in our society. Just recently, I was contacted by a recruiter who questioned, in an initial phone conversation, the fact that my LinkedIn profile did not include the year of my degree. His barely concealed age detection query was probably answered by an online search as we spoke – I will never know.

The ubiquitous Google search, which in many cases represents part of the “résumé” of a job-seeker, now displays a Connecticut candidate’s age near the top of the first page – thanks to the State of Connecticut. Just imagine how often that precludes the interview stage for older job seekers (and “older” these days can mean anyone over forty, depending on the profession). One would think that the State would want to do everything in its power to support and encourage employment for all, not *inhibit* it.

These are only a few of the myriad issues surrounding the language of the State’s Freedom of Information Act and its unintended consequences for the average person. HB 7392 attempts to correct the oversights of this Act in a way that will be fair to *all* the citizens of our State – young and old, male and female, Democrat and Republican. Allowing the Internet to rule in the mistaken belief that this constitutes some sort of magical guarantee of election integrity perpetrates a grave injustice against average voters. It is the *work* of watchdogs that protects us, not the Internet.

Please help to enact this law in order to provide for comprehensive election integrity, while restoring control of voters’ personal identity data to the voters – *the owners* – themselves.

Thank you very much.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edunfue", written in a cursive style.