

“The Personal Information of Millions”: As Facebook Ire Grows, U.S. Senator Says Zuckerberg ‘Ought to be Subpoenaed’

"The biggest problem with this scandal isn't that Cambridge Analytica is shady—it's that Facebook is."

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As the [damning details](#) of Facebook's largest-ever data breach at the hands of pro-Trump data firm Cambridge Analytica [continue to pour in](#)—and as the social media giant's [share price continues to plummet](#) as a result—Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-Conn.) on Monday called on CEO Mark Zuckerberg to “[testify under oath](#)” before Congress to explain why his company took so long to notify users that their information had been compromised.

“Zuckerberg ought to be subpoenaed to testify if he won't do it voluntarily,” Blumenthal, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, told reporters late Monday, echoing [demands of other lawmakers](#). “He owes it to the American people who ought to be deeply disappointed by the conflicting and disparate explanations that have been offered.”

Blumenthal's request comes amid growing calls—[both in the U.S. and overseas](#)—for Zuckerberg to answer for his company's failure to ban Cambridge Analytica in 2015, when the platform first discovered that the personal information of millions had been harvested in violation of company policy.

Since details of Cambridge Analytica's exploitation of Facebook were published by the *New York Times* and the *Observer* over the weekend, the social media giant has downplayed the incident, argued that it doesn't constitute a data breach at all, and maintained that Cambridge Analytica is solely to blame for the improper harvesting of personal data.

But privacy advocates have argued that while Cambridge Analytica should be held accountable for its actions, Facebook cannot be let off the hook.

“Facebook really only has itself to blame for this mess. Even with tweaks, the company has consistently privileged data collection and monetization over user privacy,” argued The New Republic's Alex Shephard in an article on Tuesday. “This has allowed it to become one of the most powerful and valuable corporations on the planet. But it has also made it the perfect platform for shady influence campaigns. Of course, the biggest problem with this scandal isn't that Cambridge Analytica is shady—it's that Facebook is.”

As the *Observer* [noted](#) in its explosive report on Saturday, Facebook “failed to alert users and took only limited steps to recover and secure the private information of more than 50 million individuals.”

In a [letter](#) (pdf) to Zuckerberg—who has [yet to make a public statement](#) about the incident—delivered on Monday, Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) highlighted “the ease with which Cambridge Analytica was able to exploit Facebook’s default privacy settings for profit and political gain” and demanded to know how many similar incidents have occurred over the past decade.

This breach, Wyden wrote, “throws into question not only the prudence and desirability of Facebook’s business practices and the dangers of monetizing consumers’ private information, but also raises serious concerns about the role Facebook played in facilitating and permitting the covert collection and misuse of consumer information.”

“With little oversight—and no meaningful intervention from Facebook—Cambridge Analytica was able to use Facebook-developed and marketed tools to weaponize detailed psychological profiles against tens of millions of Americans,” Wyden concluded. “With this in mind, I ask that you provide further information on Facebook’s role in this incident and the overall awareness your company maintains into third-party collection and use of Facebook user data.”

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