

Senate Republicans target encryption with bill aimed at Apple, Facebook, other tech giants

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Several Senate Republicans are seeking to force tech companies to help government investigators break encryption to access material that could aid in probes of terrorists, child predators, drug traffickers and other criminals.

Sens. Lindsay Graham (South Carolina), Tom Cotton (Arkansas) and Marsha Blackburn (Tennessee) introduced the Lawful Access to Encrypted Data Act, which would put an end to what they called "warrant-proof" encryption.

"My position is clear: After law enforcement obtains the necessary court authorizations, they should be able to retrieve information to assist in their investigations," Graham, who is chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, said in a statement. "Our legislation respects and protects the privacy rights of law-abiding Americans. It also puts the terrorists and criminals on notice that they will no longer be able to hide behind technology to cover their tracks."

The bill is targeted at companies like Facebook

and Apple, which have repeatedly defended their stances by saying they have an obligation to protect the billions of innocent citizens who trust the encryption embedded in their devices and apps to shield their information from public exposure. The [tech companies](#) fear that if they provide investigators with a back door past encryption, they'll open up an avenue for bad actors to exploit the entryway.

"End-to-end encryption is a necessity in modern life—it protects billions of messages sent every day on many apps and services, especially in times like these when we can't be together," Facebook said in a statement, according to CNET. "Rolling back this vital protection will make us all less safe, not more. We are committed to continuing to work with law enforcement and fighting abuse while preserving the ability for all Americans to communicate privately and securely."

Absent a backdoor past [encryption](#), [law enforcement](#) officials are currently forced with having to hack into devices or abandon investigations altogether, according to the Republicans. They pointed to examples such as the December killing of three service members and the wounding of eight at the Pensacola Naval Air Station in Pensacola, Florida. The FBI said Apple refused to help it access two iPhones of the alleged terrorist, though the agency said it later successfully hacked in.

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