



January 24, 2011

Rep. Darrell Issa  
Chairman  
House Oversight & Government Reform Committee  
2347 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC  
20515

Dear Congressman Issa:

We are writing to ask that the Oversight and Government Reform Committee investigate the relationship between Google Inc. and the executive branch of government. Consumer Watchdog has conducted a six-month investigation resulting in the attached report, *Lost in the Cloud: Google and the US Government*. The report reveals several areas where we believe Google has inappropriately benefited from close ties to the Administration. Several executive agencies have responded in a severely guarded and limited fashion to Freedom of Information Act requests on significant issues involving Google that the public deserves to know more about.

In addition, there has been insufficient federal action on Google's "Wi-Spy" debacle in which its Street View cars gathered private data from Wi-Fi networks in more than 30 countries.

This is the largest wire tapping scandal in world history by one of America's biggest and most powerful corporations, yet there has not been a single hearing on Capitol Hill. We respectfully submit that Google CEO Eric Schmidt should be asked to testify under oath so that the American public learns the truth about Wi-Spy.

An investigation by the committee of Google's relationship to the Administration is particularly timely now in light of the way the Federal Trade Commission closed its probe of the Wi-Spy incident, and the Department of Justice's current review of the pending acquisition of ITA Software.

Our report, drawn from records obtained through the Freedom of Information Act and interviews, found that Google's ambitious quest for influence with the government is starting to pay off. Here are some examples:

- There is a cozy relationship with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration that gives Google unique access to Moffett Field near Google's headquarters, where a fleet of jets and helicopters stands ready to serve Google executives. The benefits of the arrangement to date appear to be nothing more than allowing Google executives a launch pad for corporate junkets documented in the report. Others, including a non-profit humanitarian group, have sought, but been denied, use of the airfield.

- Google's close ties with the Obama White House have raised concerns about possible special treatment or conflicts of interest at the Department of Homeland Security, the US Patent & Trademark Office, the Federal Communications Commission and NASA.
- Officials at both DHS and the FCC have raised pointed concerns about weak privacy protections in Google products and whether Google's well-documented difficulties with privacy protection could create big problems for federal agencies that use its services.
- A secretive relationship with the National Security Agency. The search giant has a legitimate need to cooperate with the government's mammoth and secretive code breaking agency in its efforts to defend the integrity of U.S. computer networks. But NSA also has legal power to force Google to hand over the private information of its users. How Google executives handle this potentially conflicted relationship is largely unknown: neither Google nor the NSA are talking.

Google is most consumers' gateway to the Internet. Many of the company's services are tremendously popular. Nonetheless, it should not get special treatment and access because of a special relationship with the Administration.

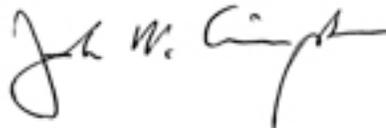
Our report only reveals only part of the picture. The House Oversight & Government Reform Committee has subpoena power if necessary. We urge you to use all the tools at the committee's disposal to reveal the extent of Google's influence on the government and how the Internet giant has unfairly benefited.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Jamie Court  
President



John M. Simpson  
Director, Inside Google Project

CC: Frederick Hill, Communications Director

Attachment: *Lost in the Cloud: Google and the US Government*