

Google Settles Lawsuit Over Alleged Secret Internet Tracking



Alphabet's Google has reached a preliminary settlement in a class-action lawsuit that accused the tech giant of secretly monitoring the online activities of millions of users who believed they were browsing privately. The proposed settlement has prompted U.S. District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers in Oakland, California, to pause the scheduled trial set for February 5, 2024.

Preliminary Settlement Reached

The lawsuit, seeking a minimum of \$5 billion in damages, alleged that Google continued tracking users' activities through its analytics, cookies, and apps even when they utilized Google's Chrome browser in "Incognito" mode or other browsers in "private" browsing mode. The settlement terms were not disclosed, but lawyers for both parties confirmed the agreement of a binding term sheet through mediation. A formal settlement is expected to be presented for court approval by February 24, 2024.

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Allegations Against Google

The plaintiffs contended that Google's practices transformed the company into an "unaccountable trove of information," allowing it to gather data about users' friends, hobbies, favorite foods, shopping habits, and potentially embarrassing online searches. In August, Judge Gonzalez Rogers rejected Google's attempt to dismiss the lawsuit, emphasizing the uncertainty about whether Google had made a legally binding commitment not to collect user data during private browsing.

Legal Background and Damages

Filed in 2020, the lawsuit covered "millions" of Google users from June 1, 2016, onwards, seeking a minimum of \$5,000 in damages per user for alleged violations of federal wiretapping and California privacy laws. The judge's decision to put the trial on hold signals a potential resolution to the lengthy legal battle between Google and the aggrieved users.

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Outlook and Response

Neither Google nor the lawyers representing the plaintiff consumers have issued official comments regarding the settlement. The case, officially known as *Brown et al. v Google LLC et al.*, is being heard in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, case number 20-03664.

Don't be a silent ninja! Let us know your thoughts in the comment section below.