

Prepared Statement of

**THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION ON
"UNSOLICITED COMMERCIAL E-MAIL"**

Before the

**Subcommittee on Communication
of the
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

held four days of hearings to explore the effect of new technologies on consumers in the marketplace. Those hearings produced a staff report, *Anticipating the 21st Century: Consumer Protection Policy in the New High-Tech, Global Marketplace*.⁽⁸⁾ The report warned of the potential for the Internet to become the newest haven for deception and fraud.

In 1995, the Commission also began its privacy initiative to explore online information practices used by Internet merchants. The Commission has held a series of public workshops to explore privacy issues and identify voluntary practices that could, if utilized, protect consumers' personally identifiable information when they visit the Internet.⁽⁹⁾ Two weeks ago, the Commission issued [*Privacy Online: A Report to Congress*](#), which includes an evaluation of self-regulatory efforts to protect consumers' privacy online.⁽¹⁰⁾

months. *Trouble @ the In-Box*

products or services frequently purchased, or weekly e-mails about discounted airfares.

These examples of bulk commercial e-mail sent at the consumer's request demonstrate the value of consumer sovereignty to the growth of Internet commerce. When consumers are able to *choose* the information they receive over the Internet, they seem likely to have more confidence in its content and in the sender. Conversely, when unsolicited information arrives in consumers' electronic mailboxes, the consumers who have contacted the Commission have been far less likely to engage in commerce with the sender.

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