



FTC Commissioner Julie Brill prepares for the day there is no Internet.

Julie Brill has a pretty good idea what the Internet will look like in five years: It won't exist. The Federal Trade Commission executive believes everyone will have so many devices deeply woven into the Internet, that the line between online and offline will simply cease to exist, Brill says. That will present many challenges for the FTC. Continuing to

provide consumers with notice and choice about how and why their data will be used is likely to become exponentially more complex.

Working as an attorney in consumer protection and antitrust for more than 20 years, Brill has become a key player in the country's digital privacy debate. *Nextgov* editorial fellow Hallie Golden recently spoke with Brill about her efforts to protect consumers online amid an evolving digital landscape. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

How did you become interested in consumer protection?

The first case that I ever did hooked me. It happened as I walked into the attorney general's office to take over a slot that was available in consumer protection. I was handed a stack of phone messages from all over the state of Vermont, about people who were having a credit reporting problem. As I dug into it, I and a number of other people within the

state discovered that the major credit reporting agencies had made a mistake in terms of how to interpret tax records in Vermont. [They] had listed hundreds of people as being tax deadbeats, when in fact they merely had a tax bill.

You've been working in this field for more than two decades. How has it changed over that time?

Technology has changed. So the tools that consumers are using to interact with each other, to interact with businesses, to gain information, have become much more sophisticated. [They] allow consumers to engage with anyone that they want to engage with much more easily. Consumers leave a trail of information about their interaction, much of which can be and is captured by a variety of

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How do you foresee this changing in the next few years?

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If you had the chance to change one thing with respect to technology and privacy in the U.S., what would that be?

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