

Facial Recognition's Rising Profile Leads to Privacy Concerns

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On February 6, the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Internet Administration ("NTIA") hosted the first of eight planned [multi-stakeholder meetings](#) aimed at creating a voluntary code of conduct to address the growing commercial and government use of facial recognition technology. The meeting included a primer on how facial technology works, current applications, technical privacy safeguards, and gaps in privacy protections that should be addressed during the upcoming sessions. Meeting attendees included government stakeholders, technology industry representatives from companies including Microsoft and FaceFirst, and consumer groups such as Consumer Action and the Center for Democracy and Technology. The second meeting is scheduled for February 25.

Notably, the meeting was held one day after Senator Al Franken (D-Minn.) [sent a letter](#) to the head of FacialNetwork.com, the developer of the [NameTag facial recognition app](#) for Google Glass users. The letter cited deep concerns with NameTag's ability to identify individuals from a distance without their knowledge and consent, the lack of federal law governing the use of facial recognition technology, and the potential for abuse by "bad actors." In the letter, Sen. Franken "strongly urged" the developer to (1) postpone NameTag's launch until after NTIA establishes its code of conduct; and (2) limit the app's facial recognition feature to individuals who have given their affirmative consent to be identified.