

As Congress loosens internet privacy protections, Minnesota moves to tighten them

By [DAVID MONTGOMERY](#) | Pioneer Press

PUBLISHED: March 29, 2017 at 9:45 pm | UPDATED: April 2, 2017 at 2:56 pm

In a surprise move, the Minnesota Senate on March 29th voted to bar internet service providers from selling their users' personal data without express written consent.

The move was a reaction to [a March 28th vote in Congress to lift a ban on that practice imposed in 2016 by the Federal Communication Commission](#).

Sen. Ron Latz, DFL-St. Louis Park, offered [the amendment](#) onto the Senate's economic development budget bill, saying it was urgently needed to protect Minnesotans' privacy after the congressional vote.

Latz's amendment was challenged under Senate rules on the grounds that it would impose a cost on a state agency and thus needed to go through committee rather than be added on the floor. Such challenges are usually routine, party-line affairs. But Republicans have just a one-vote majority in the Senate, and nothing is routine when any lawmaker has the potential to swing a vote.

Sen. Warren Limmer, R-Maple Grove. (Courtesy Minnesota Senate)

Republican Sen. Warren Limmer, of Maple Grove, broke with his party to overturn the Senate president's ruling and allow the internet privacy amendment to continue by a single vote.

"We should be outraged at the invasion that's being allowed on our most intimate means of communication," said Limmer, a longstanding privacy advocate. "This is an amendment that so urgently needs to be addressed."

Once the amendment cleared this procedural hurdle, it was overwhelmingly added to the bill on a 66-1 vote. The lone critic, Sen. David Osmek, R-Mound, said Latz's amendment needed more study and review before being adopted.

The broader jobs budget spends just over \$200 million. With the privacy amendment attached, it passed the Senate 58-9. It now must be reconciled with the House's version, which had a [similar internet privacy provision](#) added Tuesday with less drama.

Any provisions in the budgets could be removed or altered in negotiations between the two chambers. Bills that pass both chambers then head to Gov. Mark Dayton for a signature or veto