



All Your OS Are Belong to Us

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The always-wrong California legislature has unanimously passed—and the state’s always-wrong governor has signed—[legislation](#) to compel makers of computer operating systems to verify the owner’s age. The information from Linux, MacOS, Windows, iOS and Android would then be transmitted to the software (“apps”) running on each respective platform.

Reclaim the Net [observes](#) that in a “different timeline, wiring an age-surveillance layer into the boot sequence of every computing device in California is an idea that would have died in committee.”

AB1043 doesn’t require any upload of government

ID or facial scan, just that the user report age when setting up the OS. I am not relieved.

All the shmexperts eager to erode our privacy say that requiring web surfers to type a number into a box to report age is insufficient. If California’s new law is allowed to stand, perhaps in part because it seems fairly innocuous—any plucky 12-year-old could type “89” when ordered to report age—would the politicians stop there?

Some kind of ID verification would be mandated sooner or later. Then use of fake IDs would lead to calls for biometric confirmation. Etc.

Reclaim the Net explains that Linux distributions don’t even have a way to comply with the silly California law. Decentralized Linux exists for people who don’t want to be surveilled when doing their computing, and “there’s no entity to mandate, no account system to modify, no API to build.”

These and many more objections appear to me to be just common sense—now illegal in California.

I’m Paul Jacob.