

Texas AG pushes for regulation of big tech companies

By Leah Nylén

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The U.S. needs more regulation of the major tech companies, Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton said today.

The sentiment might seem a bit of a turnaround for Paxton, a conservative Republican who spent his early years as AG suing to overturn the Obama administration's energy and labor rules. But Paxton, who is leading a multistate antitrust probe into Google, said Silicon Valley's power over American society is posing a growing challenge to government at all levels.

“Technology moves faster than government, but I do think both state and federal government are really becoming aware of some of the issues that relate to these Big Tech companies having so much information and control over people’s lives through this information,” [Paxton said during an event hosted by the American Bar Association](#). “I think you are going to see both at the state, federal and local level more regulation trying to protect consumers in the future.”

In particular, Paxton highlighted some potential value to data portability rules, which seek to allow consumers to transfer their data from one online service to another. Both Europe’s General Data Protection Regulation and California’s Consumer Privacy Act require businesses to allow consumers to move their data.

“While this may not be a panacea with regards to privacy concerns, it does offer consumers some control over their lives and their data,” Paxton said of data portability requirements.

Paxton was elected attorney general in 2014 after more than a decade in the Texas Legislature. He spent his first years in office mounting legal challenges to Obama administration regulations, particularly those related to climate change, unionization and gay and transgender rights.

Last year, more than 50 attorneys general announced an antitrust probe into Google. Paxton and Texas are lead players in the investigation, spearheading part of the probe focused on the search giant’s dominance in advertising technology.

The attorney general today said he couldn’t speak to the current status of the probe, but that the coronavirus pandemic hasn’t slowed work.