**Title: Taking Back Control: Why Data Brokers Must Be Regulated**

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Every time someone scrolls through social media, shops online, or signs up for a rewards program, they may unknowingly give away bits of personal data. Companies called **data brokers** collect this information, build detailed profiles on individuals, and sell those profiles to advertisers, corporations, or even political groups. While this may sound harmless, it actually raises serious privacy concerns and can lead to unfair treatment. Data brokers operate in the background, often without people’s knowledge or consent. Because of the risks involved, data brokers should be regulated through strong privacy laws that give people control over their personal information.

Data brokers collect information from many places and turn it into digital profiles. According to the Federal Trade Commission (2014), data brokers gather data from public records, online activity, store purchases, and even social media. These profiles can include information about a person’s age, location, habits, income, and much more. In her book *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, Zuboff (2019) explains how companies track even the smallest actions, like scrolling or pausing on a webpage, to make predictions about behavior. This shows that people are being monitored constantly, even when they are unaware. Without rules, data brokers can collect and sell personal information without permission, which is a clear violation of privacy.

Some companies use this data for marketing, but others use it in more serious ways that can affect people’s lives. For example, ProPublica (Angwin, 2012) reported that companies use brokered data to make decisions about who gets job offers, loans, or insurance. If this information is wrong—or unfair—it could lead to someone being denied a job or charged more for insurance. In politics, campaigns use data to target voters with highly specific messages. The New York Times (Thompson, 2020) found that this kind of targeting can be used to influence voters based on their fears, values, or habits. When companies use personal data to shape decisions or manipulate behavior, it can cause real harm. People deserve to know when this is happening and to have a say in how their data is used.

That is why stronger laws are needed. Organizations like the Electronic Frontier Foundation (2021) argue that the U.S. needs better privacy protections, including the right to know what data is collected and the ability to delete it. One example is the California Consumer Privacy Act (California Legislative Information, 2018), which gives California residents more control over their data. This includes the right to see what companies know about them and to request that their data be deleted. These changes are a step in the right direction, but they need to happen on a national level. Without federal laws, most Americans still have little control over their personal information.

In conclusion, data brokers collect personal information in ways that many people do not understand, and this data can be used in harmful or unfair ways. Because of this, the government should pass stronger laws that regulate data brokers and protect individual privacy. People deserve the right to know how their data is being used and to have control over what happens to it. Without action, the hidden world of data trading will continue to grow—and so will the risks.

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