

Google Agrees to Pay \$1.4 Billion to Settle 2 Privacy Lawsuits

The Texas attorney general brought the cases in 2022 under state laws.

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A Google spokesman said, “This settles a raft of old claims, many of which have already been resolved elsewhere.” Stephen Lam/Reuters



By Tripp Mickle
Reporting from San Francisco

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Google agreed to pay \$1.4 billion to the State of Texas on Friday to settle two lawsuits accusing it of violating the privacy of state residents by tracking their locations and searches, as well as collecting their facial recognition information.

The state's attorney general, Ken Paxton, who secured the settlement, brought the suits in 2022 under Texas laws related to data privacy and deceptive trade practices. Less than a year ago, he reached a [\\$1.4 billion settlement with Meta](#), the parent company of Facebook and Instagram, over allegations it had illegally tagged users' faces on its site.

Google's settlement is the latest legal setback for the tech giant. Over the past two years, Google has lost a string of antitrust cases after being found to have a monopoly over [its app store](#), [search engine](#) and [advertising technology](#). It has spent the past three weeks in the search case trying to fend off a U.S. government request to break up its business.

"Big Tech is not above the law," Mr. Paxton said in a statement.

José Castañeda, a Google spokesman, said the company had already changed its product policies. "This settles a raft of old claims, many of which have already been resolved elsewhere," he said.

Privacy issues have become a major source of tension between tech giants and regulators in recent years. In the absence of a federal privacy law, states such as Texas and Washington have passed laws to curb the collection of facial, voice and other biometric data.

Google and Meta have been the highest-profile companies challenged under those laws. Texas' law, called [Capture or Use of Biometric Identifier](#), requires companies to ask permission before using features like facial or voice recognition technologies. The law allows the state to impose damages of up to \$25,000 per violation.

The [lawsuit filed under that law](#) focused on the Google Photos app, which allowed people to search for photos of a particular person; Google's Next camera, which could send alerts when it recognized visitors at a door; and Google Assistant, a virtual assistant that could learn up to six users' voices and answer their questions.

Mr. Paxton [filed a separate lawsuit](#) that accused Google of misleading Texans by tracking their personal location data, even after they thought they had disabled that feature. He added a complaint to that suit alleging that Google's private browsing setting, which it called Incognito mode, wasn't actually private. Those cases were brought under Texas' Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

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Tripp Mickle reports on Apple and Silicon Valley for The Times and is based in San Francisco. His focus on Apple includes product launches, manufacturing issues and political challenges. He also writes about trends across the tech industry, including layoffs, generative A.I. and robot taxis.

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