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U.S. Legislators Take Up RFID Issue

Legislation that would put limits on the use of RFID technology in consumer products has been introduced in California and Utah. Both bills would require all products containing an RFID tag to have a label indicating that fact to consumers. The Utah bill had passed the state's house of

representatives at press time and had been introduced in



the state senate. The California legislation, sponsored by Sen. Debra Bowen, goes further. It requires retailers to get a customer's express consent before tracking and collecting any information and requires retailers to remove or deactivate the tags in products before the customer leaves the store. Hearings will be held on Bowen's bill this spring.

The prospects for either bill becoming law are unclear, but Bowen's bill would likely slow the adoption of RFID technology at the consumer level. Requiring all tags to be killed at checkout means large retailers would need to invest millions of dollars to put a reader at every checkout counter to kill tags, and they would need some way to confirm all tags had been deactivated before a customer left the store.

EPCglobal, the body commercializing Electronic Product Code technology, has recommended that retailers use labels to inform consumers and offer customers the option of killing or removing the RFID tag. Many privacy and consumer advocates feel these measures aren't strong enough.



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