

## Last Week Tonight Host Pokes at Congress Over Data Brokering Regulation

Article By:

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John Oliver, comedian and host of HBO's *Last Week Tonight*, called on Congress to issue broad data privacy legislation by making it elegantly personal – he bought their data. Following a 25-minute segment on the ubiquity of third-party trackers and data brokering, the late night host revealed that his staff had created an advertiser's profile targeting "men aged 45 and up" in the Capitol Hill area who had previously visited sites and made searches regarding "divorce, massage, hair loss, and midlife crisis." They ran a series of ads with embarrassing titles including "Marriage Shouldn't Be A Prison," "Can You Vote Twice?," and (to the studio audience's delight) "Do You Want To Read Ted Cruz Erotic Fan Fiction?"

Oliver's phishing expedition turned up several unique users in and near Capitol Hill, including at least three IP addresses originating from inside the Capitol building itself. The users in the Capitol building clicked on each of the ads (including, disturbingly, the ad for Ted Cruz erotica).

Oliver refrained from threatening or doxing any member of Congress in particular, and he claimed in his segment that he had not de-anonymized any of the data he collected. The implication though was clear: Oliver's scheme is tailor-made for political opposition research, and the next person might not be so accommodating.

*\*This post was authored by Blair Robinson, legal intern at Robinson+Cole. Blair is not yet admitted to practice law.*

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