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Student Privacy Protection Included in Education Bill

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The Senate voted 87-10 to pass an education reform bill that would allow parents to prohibit companies from gathering information about their children at school. The legislation was originally proposed by Sens. Richard Shelby (R-Ala.) and Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.) as the Student Privacy Protection Act last year, but including it in the more comprehensive reform bill significantly improves its chances of being signed by President Bush. Companies frequently offer IT equipment and Internet access to public schools in exchange for the right to monitor students' usage and collect information about what they view and buy online. Consumer advocates and parents groups warned that marketers were exploiting children in this way, and the privacy language seeks to curtail such practices. The bill would give parents the choice to opt out of such data collection services. The education package will also earmark \$7 billion for state technology initiatives, \$450 million for math and science partnerships, and \$250 million for school libraries to boost literacy through technology acquisitions.

Summary by Edupage 19 Dec 2001

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