



**April 23, 2025**

Malcolm Smith  
GIFFORDS Gun Owners for Safety

Mr. Kashyap Patel  
Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation  
935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20535

Mr. Daniel Driscoll  
Acting Director, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives  
99 New York Ave NE  
Washington, D.C. 20002

Christopher Mufarrige  
Director, Bureau of Consumer Protection  
Federal Trade Commission  
600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20580

Dear Mr. Patel, Mr. Driscoll & Mr. Mufarrige,

Investigative journalism recently unearthed that a major U.S. trade association transferred consumer data without authorization to a European company in an effort to exploit intimate personal information for political gain – the National Shooting Sports Foundation, or the firearm industry's association. As a firearms enthusiast and collector—and a Republican—I have serious concerns regarding the handling of gun owners' private data, maybe even my own.

*"A ProPublica review of dozens of warranty cards from the 1970s through today found that some promised customers their information would be kept strictly confidential. Others said some information could be shared with third parties for marketing and sales. None of the cards informed buyers their details would be used by lobbyists and consultants to win elections."*

Any industry that for nearly two decades systematically collected and trafficked private citizens' confidential information to sway government outcomes must be investigated by law enforcement and consumer protection officials.

Even the gun industry.

As the nonpartisan, nonprofit newsroom ProPublica [reported](#), the National Shooting Sports Foundation—the firearm industry trade association—created a massive database of industry customers from at least 10 companies, including Glock, Smith & Wesson, Remington, and Mossberg. ProPublica's sources included multiple former gun executives, NSSF employees, and NRA lobbyists. This underhanded scheme occurred despite promises to consumers that data would be confidential or used only for promotional purposes. Further:

*“In April 2016, a contractor on NSSF’s voter education project delivered a large cache of data to Cambridge Analytica, a political consulting firm credited with playing a key role in Trump’s narrow victory that year. The company later went out of business amid a global scandal over its handling of confidential consumer data.*

*The data given to Cambridge included 20 years of gun owners’ warranty card information as well as a separate database of customers from Cabela’s, a sporting goods retailer with approximately 70 stores in the U.S. and Canada.*

*Cambridge combined the NSSF data with a wide array of sensitive particulars obtained from commercial data brokers. It included people’s income, their debts, their religion, where they filled prescriptions, their children’s ages and purchases they made for their kids. For women, it revealed intimate elements such as whether the underwear and other clothes they purchased were plus size or petite.”*

No matter the industry, exploiting customers’ private data like their underwear size and children’s ages in a secret scheme is reprehensible and cannot be permitted.

NSSF hired Cambridge Analytica to use an algorithm to create psychological profiles that would be used to sway their votes in elections. As reported, the companies that partnered with NSSF “may have violated federal and state prohibitions against deceptive and unfair business practices.”

A pro-gun customer interviewed by ProPublica agrees, [saying](#) “I don’t like the idea that they’re getting information, possibly illegally, to forward their agenda.” Another customer demands answers: “Why is my information in there? Why did you need it or want it? Yes, you could use it to pummel me with postcards, but what else are you doing with it?”

The NSSF is fully aware of the concerns and sensitivities around gun owner data—it cannot plead ignorance. [For example](#), the reporting noted “For two decades, the group positioned itself

as an unwavering watchdog of gun owner privacy. The organization has raged against government and corporate attempts to amass information on gun buyers. As recently [as this year](#) [2024], the NSSF pushed for laws that would prohibit credit card companies from creating special codes for firearms dealers, claiming the codes could be used to create a registry of gun purchasers.”

Gun owners’ privacy is not a partisan or ideological issue. Gun rights groups like Gun Owners of America (GOA) speak out frequently against any database of gun industry consumers. Director Patel has a close working relationship with GOA and [has echoed its concerns](#) about gun owner privacy. Surely, then, the FBI understands the importance of ensuring no organization or government agency maintains a secret database of firearm customers and gun owners. As many high-profile hacks and data leaks have shown, private data can easily be mishandled and exploited for nefarious purposes.

On behalf of all American gun owners, I request that you investigate this potentially improper collection and exploitation of intimate personal information by the NSSF and the gun industry with the seriousness it deserves.

Sincerely,

Malcolm Smith  
GIFFORDS Gun Owners for Safety