# Clearview AI settlement sparks global privacy backlash as Right to Repair laws sweep US



The rapid ascent of artificial intelligence (AI) in various sectors has become a double-edged sword, revealing both innovation and deep-seated ethical concerns. In a stark illustration, Clearview AI, a significant player in facial recognition technology, has recently been scrutinised for its controversial data practices. The company, which markets its services to law enforcement agencies, has amassed an extensive database by scraping billions of images from social media without user consent. This has raised serious privacy issues, leading to legal battles and significant settlements aimed at addressing its violations of biometric privacy laws.

In March 2025, a U.S. judge approved a class-action settlement that permits plaintiffs a stake in the company as compensation for their privacy claims. While this settlement may offer a glimmer of accountability, it is coupled with discontent from several states that view the resolution as insufficient. Critics argue that it trivialises profound concerns about personal data use in the face of technology’s relentless march.

Moreover, Clearview’s operations have provoked backlash not just in the U.S., but globally. Last September, the Dutch Data Protection Authority imposed a hefty fine on the company for maintaining an illegally acquired database, reaffirming a growing consensus worldwide about the need for stricter regulations on facial recognition technology. These developments underscore an increasing urgency for both regulatory frameworks and societal dialogue on the implications of pervasive surveillance.

As the landscape of AI evolves, it also manifests in unexpected ways that challenge traditional norms, such as the phenomenon dubbed 'Dead Internet Theory'. This theory posits that the actual content available online is significantly smaller than it appears, with a growing portion of online media generated by algorithms rather than human creativity. AI systems are adept at producing vast quantities of content quickly, often referred to as ‘AI slop’, which has prompted discussions about quality versus quantity in online engagement. While some pieces may still resonate, the prevailing tendencies could dilute the richness of human-generated content.

Simultaneously, a new social media platform, SocialAI, has emerged, where users engage exclusively with AI-generated personas. This app allows users to create their social environments with personalities of their choosing, creating an artificial yet immersive experience. Critics argue that this not only promotes isolation but raises questions about self-perception and reality, as users engage with non-human entities mimicking social interactions.

In sectors beyond social media, AI applications are also raising ethical flags, particularly in the workplace. A performance monitoring system named OptifyeAI demonstrates a trend towards dehumanising labor by tracking workers’ movements and productivity through intricate surveillance systems. This approach, while aimed at increasing efficiency, risks undermining the dignity of workers and could lead to severe consequences for those deemed underperformers, as evidenced by viral demonstrations of its use.

Amidst these challenges, a movement advocating for the 'Right to Repair' is gaining momentum across the United States, with legislation now introduced in all 50 states. This initiative stems from a decade-long effort aimed at empowering consumers to have agency over their own devices, counteracting the growing trend of manufacturers restricting access to repair parts and documents. By advocating for fair access to repair tools, supporters highlight the economic benefits for households and small businesses alike, projecting an average savings of $330 per year for families opting to repair rather than replace broken electronics.

This legislative surge illustrates a significant shift in consumer rights advocacy, promoting sustainability and challenging the current model that often encourages wasteful consumerism. With states like Minnesota and California leading the charge, the Right to Repair movement exemplifies a broader desire among citizens for control over their belongings, pushing back against trends that favour corporate profit over individual agency.

As society grapples with the dual-edged impact of AI and surveillance capitalism, it becomes increasingly clear that the need for balanced regulation, public discourse, and ethical frameworks is paramount. By doing so, we can begin to address the complex issues that arise in this rapidly changing landscape and work towards a future where technology aligns more closely with our values and rights.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2025/06/01/guest-blog-talk-liberation-ai-steals-billions-of-photos-from-social-media-to-help-cops-right-to-repair-is-introduced-to-all-50-states/), [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/us-judge-approves-novel-clearview-ai-class-action-settlement-2025-03-21/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/us-judge-approves-novel-clearview-ai-class-action-settlement-2025-03-21/), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/clearview-ai-fined-by-dutch-agency-facial-recognition-database-2024-09-03/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2025/06/01/guest-blog-talk-liberation-ai-steals-billions-of-photos-from-social-media-to-help-cops-right-to-repair-is-introduced-to-all-50-states/), [[5]](https://www.repair.org/legislation)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2025/06/01/guest-blog-talk-liberation-ai-steals-billions-of-photos-from-social-media-to-help-cops-right-to-repair-is-introduced-to-all-50-states/), [[1]](https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2025/06/01/guest-blog-talk-liberation-ai-steals-billions-of-photos-from-social-media-to-help-cops-right-to-repair-is-introduced-to-all-50-states/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2025/06/01/guest-blog-talk-liberation-ai-steals-billions-of-photos-from-social-media-to-help-cops-right-to-repair-is-introduced-to-all-50-states/), [[6]](https://www.404media.co/all-50-states-have-now-introduced-right-to-repair-legislation/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[4]](https://www.repair.org/blog/2025/2/24/ptkkw1yziw8xv7u9iwhoohl42ojyvu), [[5]](https://www.repair.org/legislation)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://thedailyblog.co.nz/2025/06/01/guest-blog-talk-liberation-ai-steals-billions-of-photos-from-social-media-to-help-cops-right-to-repair-is-introduced-to-all-50-states/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/us-judge-approves-novel-clearview-ai-class-action-settlement-2025-03-21/> - In March 2025, a U.S. judge approved a groundbreaking nationwide class-action settlement addressing privacy claims against Clearview AI. The facial recognition company was accused of violating Illinois biometric privacy laws by scraping billions of facial images from the web without consent. The settlement offers plaintiffs a potential 23% equity stake in Clearview AI, with the possibility of up to $51.75 million if the company goes public or is sold. Alternatively, Clearview may be required to pay 17% of its revenue by 2027. Despite objections from 22 states and D.C. regarding the settlement's structure and legal fees, the judge deemed the arrangement fair and reasonable, highlighting the complexities of biometric data privacy and the evolving solutions in response. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/legal/litigation/us-judge-approves-novel-clearview-ai-class-action-settlement-2025-03-21/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/clearview-ai-fined-by-dutch-agency-facial-recognition-database-2024-09-03/> - In September 2024, Clearview AI, a U.S. facial recognition company, was fined €30.5 million by the Dutch Data Protection Authority (DPA) for maintaining an illegal database. The DPA imposed an additional penalty of up to €5 million for non-compliance. Clearview AI did not contest the decision, forfeiting any right to appeal. DPA Chairman Aleid Wolfsen emphasized the intrusive nature of facial recognition technology and its indiscriminate use, reinforcing that Clearview's services are illegal under Dutch regulations. This decision underscores the global scrutiny and legal challenges faced by Clearview AI concerning privacy violations. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/clearview-ai-fined-by-dutch-agency-facial-recognition-database-2024-09-03/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.repair.org/blog/2025/2/24/ptkkw1yziw8xv7u9iwhoohl42ojyvu> - As of February 2025, all 50 U.S. states are actively participating in the Right to Repair movement. Wisconsin and New Mexico introduced repair legislation for the first time, completing the nationwide effort. States like New York, Oregon, and Minnesota continue to enhance existing laws, marking steady progress. The movement supports the right to repair any damaged device, from phones to tractors, challenging manufacturers who restrict access to parts and tools. This initiative aims to empower consumers and small repair shops, promoting sustainability and consumer rights across the country. ([repair.org](https://www.repair.org/blog/2025/2/24/ptkkw1yziw8xv7u9iwhoohl42ojyvu?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.repair.org/legislation> - The Repair Association advocates for Fair Repair legislation in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Their interactive map provides summaries of proposed or enacted legislation, along with contact information for state legislators. The association highlights that American households could save an average of $330 per year by repairing phones, computers, and appliances instead of purchasing new ones. With 84% of residents supporting legislation requiring manufacturers to provide necessary tools, parts, and information for product repairs, the association emphasizes the widespread public demand for repair-friendly policies. ([repair.org](https://www.repair.org/legislation?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.404media.co/all-50-states-have-now-introduced-right-to-repair-legislation/> - In February 2025, Wisconsin became the final state to introduce a Right to Repair bill, marking a significant milestone in the movement. While not all legislation has passed, the introduction of bills in all 50 states demonstrates the grassroots political power behind the Right to Repair movement. So far, laws have been passed in Massachusetts, New York, Minnesota, Colorado, California, and Oregon. The movement aims to make it easier for consumers to repair electronics, farmers to fix agricultural equipment, and hospitals to maintain medical devices, promoting sustainability and consumer rights. ([404media.co](https://www.404media.co/all-50-states-have-now-introduced-right-to-repair-legislation/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.statista.com/chart/32855/us-states-with-at-least-one-bill-regulating-right-to-repair-own-products/> - A Statista chart illustrates the progress of Right to Repair legislation across U.S. states. Massachusetts was the first to introduce a Right to Repair law for automobiles in 2012. New York passed a comprehensive law on consumer electronics repairs in March 2023, followed by California in October 2023. The California Right to Repair Act became applicable on July 1, 2024, and was endorsed by Apple. However, the bill doesn't include information on parts pairing, a practice that couples components with a specific device via a digital serial number, making repairs challenging for individuals and independent shops. ([statista.com](https://www.statista.com/chart/32855/us-states-with-at-least-one-bill-regulating-right-to-repair-own-products/?utm_source=openai))