

Electronic privacy bill clears crucial vote in the Senate

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SALT LAKE CITY, Utah- (ABC4 News) – A first-of-its-kind electronic privacy bill takes a big step at the state Capitol.

After a unanimous vote from the Senate, it's one step closer to heading to the Governor's Office.

Technology has changed the way we live.

Most of us carry around sensitive personal information right in the palm of our hands.

Privacy advocates say the law hasn't kept up with that evolution.

"We've seen in recent years substantial abuse by the government of having access to people's private information without having to go to a neutral judge first to make the case for accessing it," said Connor Boyack with the Libertas Institute.

That's where House Bill 57, titled Electronic Information or Data Privacy comes in.

It requires state and local law enforcement agencies to get a warrant to access certain information or data.

That includes information on our personal devices and stored with third parties.

"This bill just makes sure that all of the protections we have with respect to our physical stuff is also available for our electronic data," said bill sponsor Representative Craig Hall, (R) West Valley.

The bill has already cleared the House and passed the Senate on its second reading 26-0. But, it hasn't been all smooth sailing. The bill is on its 5th substitute.

"Which means there have been five different iterations so far of the bill, and that doesn't even reflect the probably hundreds of long discussions and word changes that took place behind the scenes to get to where we are at today," said Marina Lowe with the ACLU of Utah.

It's poised to become the first state law of its kind in our country.

"Our hope is that in leading out we're going to be able to go to our sister organizations and legislators in other states to try to get them to follow suit and that we can get really a nationwide better protection for data privacy in the years to come," said Boyack.

The bill just needs one final vote in the Senate and will have to go back to the House to concur on a change that was made.

Then it will be off to the Governor's Office.

Advocates are confident he will sign it.

