

Patronscan to pull back on length of data retention, bar bans in Pa. [Lancaster Watchdog]

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Last week, The Watchdog [wrote about an ID scanner popping up at bars around Lancaster](#) that, while backed by bar owners, is raising some eyebrows among customers and data privacy experts.

Patronscan, a subscription-based security system, checks the IDs of patrons for fakes, takes a photo of each patron, and lifts personal identifying details off their ID to store temporarily for use if a patron causes a problem and needs to be banned from the establishment.

The Patronscan system allows bars to apply internal bans, which apply only to the local bar, or external bans, which go out across a growing network of Patronscan clients that stretches across 200 cities and 20 countries. Bans can be applied for anything from fights to harassment of staff or other patrons. Bar staff have full discretion to decide what qualifies as the “violent or otherwise undesirable” behavior that can trigger a Patronscan ban.

While bar owners and the company maintain the system deters problem patrons and helps keep nightlife safe, opponents question the system’s data security and whether that amount of power in private hands amounts to a type of vigilante justice.

Since that column was published, Patronscan told the Watchdog that the network will undergo a systemwide update that will shorten data retention periods and maximum time frames allowed for bans across North America. The new update will go

into effect on Nov. 30 in Pennsylvania. The rest of the United States is expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Currently, as long as someone was not flagged, their personal information would be permanently deleted within 90 days, according to the company. The new data retention policy will be 21 days, according to PatronsCan spokesperson Marko Mlikotin.

The plan to switch to a 21-day period has been in the works for the past year, Mlikotin said. He said the move is mainly driven by a desire for uniformity across North America and that there are benefits to consistency, including compliance and marketing.

Additionally, there will no longer be an option for a lifetime ban. That switch has happened in other places already but has not been applied to Pennsylvania yet, Mlikotin said. The lifetime ban option was available for bars to apply internally and would automatically trigger a one-year networkwide ban. The new maximum will be five years, Mlikotin said.

For public flags, or bans across the PatronsCan network, the maximum time is one year.

Local bar owners said they were unaware of the change coming to the system.

Eric Yeager, one of the owners of Marion Court Room in downtown Lancaster, supports the changes and sees them as a good thing overall, though it will not change much in terms of how the bar operates.

“(Five years) is still more than enough time for someone to get the message or have to change their behavior,” Yeager said.

As for the data retention period shortening, Yeager said he understands why people may have concerns with data storage and questions over the amount of time. He pointed out that the data is retained for purely functional security reasons, and he’s

happy for that data to remain in the system for as short a period as possible to achieve those aims.

Mlikotin said the transition to adopting the new time frames is lengthy to ensure compliance with different government agencies and is not as simple as “flipping the switch.”

The transition is already completed across Canada, and when the United States is done by the end of the year, the transition across the system in North America will be complete.