



Written by [Joe Wolverton, II, J.D.](#) on August 4, 2012

Romney 2012 Smartphone App Tracks Users' GPS Location

If you can't wait to know whom Mitt Romney will choose as a running mate, [you'd better run out and buy a smart phone.](#)

On July 31, [the Romney 2012 campaign announced the release of an iPhone and Android application](#) that will inform users of the big news as soon as the decision is made.



According to the press release, the Romney camp says that users of the app will learn the identity of the VP selection "before the press and just about everyone else (except maybe Ann)."

Readers may remember that during the 2008 campaign, then-candidate Barack Obama created a database of thousands of supporters' cellphone numbers promising to send a mass text announcing his vice presidential pick. The identity of Joe Biden as Obama's running mate was leaked to the press in advance of the text message, however.

In the case of "Mitt's VP" app, there are a few details about the app that should concern those of us who are wary of the expanding surveillance state and the ability of those in government (or in this case, those who want to be in government) to track the movements (real and virtual) of cellphone users. Specifically, [the permissions embedded within the Android version include the following seemingly unnecessary inclusions:](#)

FINE (GPS) LOCATION

Access fine location sources such as the Global Positioning System on the tablet, where available. Malicious apps may use this to determine where you are, and may consume additional battery power. Access fine location sources such as the Global Positioning System on the phone, where available. Malicious apps may use this to determine where you are, and may consume additional battery power.

COARSE (NETWORK-BASED) LOCATION

Access coarse location sources such as the cellular network database to determine an approximate tablet location, where available. Malicious apps may use this to determine approximately where you are. Access coarse location sources such as the cellular network database to determine an approximate phone location, where available. Malicious apps may use this to determine approximately where you are.

NETWORK COMMUNICATION

FULL INTERNET ACCESS

Allows the app to create network sockets.

STORAGE

MODIFY/DELETE USB STORAGE CONTENTS MODIFY/DELETE SD CARD CONTENTS

Allows the app to write to the USB storage. Allows the app to write to the SD card.

Why would the Romney presidential campaign need to be able to track the GPS location of users? Why



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would the campaign need to know which cellular network the user is on? Why would the campaign need to create network sockets on users' phones? Why would the campaign need to read and write the contents of a user's USB storage device or SD card? A call to Romney headquarters seeking answers to these important questions was not returned.



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