Google faces new antitrust lawsuit over Google Play Store fees



On Wednesday, a coalition of state attorneys general launched a new antitrust lawsuit against Google, accusing the search giant of abusing its control of the Android app store, as reported by *Bloomberg*.

The lawsuit, filed by 36 states and Washington, DC, in California federal court, challenges Google's policy forcing Google Play app developers to pay a 30 percent commission fee on sales made through the app. Google recently expanded the fees to cover more digital goods purchased on the Play Store, taking particular aim at a number of prominent apps that had previously been able to sidestep the tax.

As of press time, the lawsuit was visible on the court's website, confirming Bloomberg's reporting. The central complaint has yet to be published, but the site listed the defendants as Google, Alphabet, and subsidiaries in Ireland and Asia.

In August, *Fortnite* developer Epic Games sued Google on similar grounds, claiming that the company's practices have raised prices for consumers online, although the lawsuit was largely overshadowed by Epic's parallel case against Apple and its App Store. Still, the state AGs' lawsuit is likely to have more force, coming from designated state-level regulators.

The lawsuit comes amid mounting federal pressure on Google, which is already facing three federal antitrust lawsuits, including an ongoing Justice Department case accusing the company of monopoly practices in search advertising.

Android has typically been seen as less of an antitrust threat than Apple's iOS, since it does not require Google Play as the sole source of software on the phone. However, the growing pressure on Apple has called many aspects of the Play Store's fee structure into question.

In recent hearings, lawmakers and regulators have repeatedly questioned Apple and Google's abilities to make their app stores the defaults on mobile devices, a practice that often extends to specific apps. More recently, Google joined Apple in lowering its fee to 15 percent for smaller developers, a move widely seen as a response to mounting public pressure.

Google did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

https://www.theverge.com/2021/7/7/22567532/google-play-store-antitrust-lawsuit-state-ag-app-fees