Software Freedom Conservancy announced today it has filed a lawsuit against Vizio Inc. for what it calls repeated failures to fulfill even the basic requirements of the General Public License (GPL).

The lawsuit alleges that Vizio's TV products, built on its SmartCast system, contain software that Vizio unfairly appropriated from a community of developers who intended consumers to have very specific rights to modify, improve, share, and reinstall modified versions of the software.

Software Freedom Conservancy has announced that it filed suit against TV maker Vizio over "repeated failures to fulfill even the basic requirements of the General Public License (GPL)". The organization raised the problems with Vizio in August 2018, but the company stopped responding in January 2020, according to the announcement.
The SFC is suing Vizio because its SmartCast OS is based on Linux. Linux's source code is protected under the GPL version 2 (GPLv2). Besides the Linux kernel, the other GPL'd and Lesser GPL (LGPL)'d code in SmartCast includes U-Boot, bash, gawk, tar, Glibc, and FFmpeg. In short, Vizio is using the code without permission.

This can't come as any surprise. Vizio has been made well aware of this problem. The company was first informed that it had violated the GPLv2 for not releasing SmartCast OS's source code by the SFC in August 2018. After over a year of diplomatic attempts to work with the company, the Conservancy declared that not only was the company still refusing to comply, but it had stopped responding to inquiries altogether as of January 2020.