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NEWS RELEASE

Committee on Energy and Commerce

Rep. John D. Dingell, Chairman

For Immediate Release: May 10, 2007

Contact: Jodi Seth or Carrie Annand, 202-225-5735

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"Personal identification is distributed and exploited with increasing frequency and volume nowadays. These bills will help protect Americans from the dangers lurking behind seemingly innocent, everyday actions like making Internet purchases," said Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee.

If signed into law, the Spy Act would shield Internet users from under-the-radar spyware programs that can secretly invade their computers and monitor online activity. The bill would require software distributors and advertisers to clearly notify and require consent from consumers before they download programs from the Internet. Offenders could be assessed a fine of up to \$3 million for each unfair or deceptive spyware act and up to \$1 million for each violation relating to the collection of personal information without notice and consent.

The Social Security Number bill would protect consumers from the ever-increasing problem of identity theft. By obtaining social security numbers, thieves are better able to steal identities and create huge debts for victims. The legislation would restrict the sale, purchase and use of Social Security Numbers except in situations approved by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), such as for law enforcement or health purposes. Violators would be fined \$11,000 per infraction, up to \$5 million.

The two bills now await consideration by the full House of Representatives.

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Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce

2125 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515