

Privacy Legislation

DINGELL, MARKEY, TOWNS, RUSH INTRODUCE MAJOR PRIVACY BILLS FOR NATIONAL CONSUMER PROTECTION WEEK

Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI), Chairman of the Committee on Energy and Commerce, announced that the Committee's leadership on privacy issues today introduced major bipartisan legislation dealing with pretexting, spyware, Social Security number protection, and data security.

"National Consumer Protection Week (Feb. 4 - 10) is a fitting time to make a serious down payment on resolving the scourge of identity theft and related abuse," said Dingell. "We intend to process these bills by regular order in the Committee and report them expeditiously to the House. We will work cooperatively with other committees to resolve jurisdictional issues, and with stakeholders (government regulators, consumer groups, and business) to resolve policy issues. The American public is owed no less than the full measure of our combined best efforts. These bills address serious problems that are not going away and only worsen while the Congress dithers."

The bills are:

- The Prevention of Fraudulent Access to Phone Records Act, introduced by Dingell and Ranking Member Joe Barton (R-TX), and 24 original cosponsors, to prohibit pretexting of phone records and to enhance security requirements for customer proprietary network information.
- The Social Security Number Protection Act of 2007, introduced by Reps. Ed Markey (D-MA), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet and Barton, and 22 original cosponsors, to strengthen the authority of the Federal Government to protect individuals from abusive acts and practices in the sale and purchase of Social Security numbers.

"If someone actually obtains a Social Security number on the Internet, they have a critically important piece of information that can be used to locate a person, get access to their finances, or engage in a variety

of other illegal activities," said Markey. "By stopping unregulated commerce in Social Security numbers, this bill will help reduce the incidence of pretexting crimes, identity thefts and other frauds or crimes involving misuse of a person's Social Security number."

- The Securely Protect Yourself Against Cyber Trespass Act (or SPY ACT), introduced by Reps. Edolphus Towns (D-NY) and Mary Bono (R-CA), and 28 original cosponsors, to protect users of the Internet from unknowing transmission of the personally identifiable information through spyware programs.

- The Data Accountability and Trust Act (or DATA), introduced by Reps. Bobby Rush (D-IL), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection and Subcommittee Ranking Member Cliff Stearns (R-FL), and 22 original cosponsors, to protect consumers by requiring entities engaged in interstate commerce to have reasonable security policies and procedures to protect data containing personal information, and to provide for nationwide notice in the event of a security breach.

"Data breaches continue at a rapid pace and constitute a major threat to consumers," said Rush. "We must pass comprehensive data security legislation this year."

The Committee on Energy and Commerce has Rule X jurisdiction over consumer affairs and consumer protection and is the lead committee on privacy matters.

- 30 -

[Note: The bill links are in pdf file format. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to view them.]

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