



Senate Passes Identity Theft Legislation

-- Senator Feinstein calls on President Bush for swift enactment --
June 25, 2004

Washington, DC – The U.S. Senate today unanimously passed legislation to increase penalties for identity theft that was first introduced by U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.).

The bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives on June 23, 2004 strengthened the provisions in the original version of Senator Feinstein’s legislation, which was passed by the Senate on March 19, 2003.

“The identity theft epidemic in this country must be stopped,” Senator Feinstein said. **“I hope that President Bush will sign this bill into law soon so that prosecutors will have the tools they need to suitably punish identity thieves, especially those who steal in order to commit more serious crimes, such as acts of terrorism.”**

This legislation, which was developed in coordination with the Justice Department, will impose stronger penalties on identity thieves and help prosecutors target identity thieves who steal for the purpose of committing the most serious crimes, including terrorism and murder.

The Federal Trade Commission estimates that almost 10 million Americans discovered they were the victims of some form of identity theft in the last year. It is also estimated that in the last year identity theft crimes cost U.S. businesses and consumers more than \$52 billion and that victims spent 297 million hours resolving issues of personal fraud. California has the second-highest rate of identity theft per capita of all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

This legislation will:

- **Increases penalties by two years** for anyone who commits “aggravated identity theft” in order to commit other serious Federal offenses, known as predicate crimes, such as immigration violations, false citizenship crimes, the theft of federal funds, the theft or embezzlement of bank funds, the improper receipt of Social Security benefits, and the improper receipt of Supplemental Security Insurance benefits, and firearms offenses; and
- **Increases penalties by five years** for anyone who commits identity theft for the purpose of committing a terrorist act.

- Allow the aggregate value of stolen federal funds to be combined for felony prosecution in appropriate cases;
- Direct the Sentencing Commission to amend its guidelines in order to punish insider offenses that involve an “abuse of trust” of the offender’s position; and
- Authorize \$2 million each year for fiscal years 2005 to 2009 to the Department of Justice for the investigation and prosecution of identity theft and related credit card and other fraud cases.

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