



## Senator Feinstein Adds Support to Bill Studying Ties Between Meth Use, Identity Theft May 24, 2005

**Washington, DC** – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) has signed onto legislation introduced by Senator Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.) to study the connection between methamphetamine use and identity theft crimes.

**“In recent years, we’ve seen the number of meth labs seized and reports of identity theft shoot up,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“Law enforcement officials are reporting that this is not just a coincidence. These two crimes can turn people’s lives upside down and threaten entire communities. It’s time to take a closer look at the connection between meth use and identity theft.”**

Currently, no definitive data exists on the relationship between identity theft and meth use, but reports from law enforcement officials in communities across the western United States indicate a strong connection between the two crimes.

In the last year, police have seized more than 9,300 meth labs nationally – a 500 percent increase since 1996 – according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. So far this year, California law enforcement officers have seized over 800 meth labs, more than the 778 labs seized in all of 2004.

There has also been a dramatic rise in the incidence of identity theft in recent years. In 2003, the Federal Trade Commission received 214,905 reports of identity theft, up from 86,212 complaints in 2001.

The study commissioned by the legislation will evaluate:

- The advisability of imposing sentencing enhancements if a person commits a crime involving methamphetamine and identity theft;
- The advisability of establishing an electronic clearinghouse within the Department of Justice for Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies to share information regarding these crimes; and
- If individuals who use methamphetamine are more likely to commit certain types of identity theft crimes.

The study would also require that the Attorney General submit a report to Congress detailing the findings of the study, as well as recommendations for any legislative changes. The Bureau of Justice Statistics is expected to cover the study's costs.

Senator Feinstein is the sponsor, along with Senator Jim Talent (R-Mo.), of the Combat Meth Act, legislation to curb methamphetamine production by moving pseudoephedrine, the primary ingredient used to make meth, behind the pharmacy counter. Senator Feinstein has also introduced legislation to tackle the problem of identity theft by setting standards for protecting personal information such as Social Security numbers, driver's licenses, and medical and financial data, including information collected both online and offline.

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