



Feinstein Applauds House Panel for Passing Legislation
to Increase Penalties for Identity Theft Crimes
April 1, 2004

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) today urged the House of Representatives to quickly approve legislation that would increase penalties on identity theft crimes.

Yesterday, the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security approved the legislation by voice vote. It now goes to the full House Judiciary committee for consideration. Senator Feinstein is the sponsor of similar legislation in the Senate, which was approved on March 19, 2003.

The bill, which was developed in coordination with the Justice department, would impose tougher penalties on identity thieves and make it easier for prosecutors to target those identity thieves who steal for the purpose of committing the most serious crimes, including terrorism.

“Identity theft has reached epidemic proportions in recent years,” Senator Feinstein said. **“It is especially a problem when thieves steal identities as a means to commit more serious crimes.”**

“This legislation will give prosecutors a leg up in the fight against identity theft,” Senator Feinstein said. **“It will particularly help in those cases where criminals use stolen identities to commit acts of terrorism, murder, and other serious crimes.”**

According to the Federal Trade Commission, there were 214,905 victims of identity theft in the U.S. during 2003, up sharply from 161,836 in 2002 and 86,212 in 2001. Of last year’s victims, 39,452 were Californians, giving California the third-highest per capita rate of identity theft of any state. The Federal Trade Commission estimates that identity thefts cost U.S. businesses and consumers over \$50 billion last year.

Specifically, the legislation would:

- Create a separate crime of "aggravated identity theft" for any person who used the identity of another person to commit a terrorist act, to commit wire fraud, to steal a passport or visa, or other serious crimes;
- Expand the maximum penalty for identity theft under Federal law from three to five years;
- Clarify that the twenty-five year maximum sentence for identity theft in facilitating terrorism applies to both international and domestic terrorism; and

- Add the word "possess" to the Federal identity theft statute so that law enforcement can target individuals who possess identity documents with the intent to commit another crime.

“I am pleased that the House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security acted on this legislation,” Senator Feinstein said. **“I hope the Judiciary Committee and the full House will approve it soon.”**

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