

Statement of  
**The Honorable Patrick Leahy**

United States Senator  
Vermont  
March 21, 2007

Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy,  
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary,  
for Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland  
Security, Hearing on "Identity Theft: Innovative Solutions for an Evolving Problem"  
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I commend Senator Feinstein for conducting today's subcommittee hearing on "Identity Theft: Innovative Solutions for an Evolving Problem." The evolving problem of identity theft remains a serious threat to Americans' privacy and it is an issue that the Judiciary Committee should carefully examine.

According to the Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, more than 100 million records containing sensitive personal information -- such as name, address and social security numbers -- have been involved in data security breaches since 2005. Despite this sobering statistic, we continue to learn about more and more data breaches that expose millions of Americans to identity theft.

Earlier this year, mega-retailer TJX Companies, Inc. disclosed that it suffered a major computer breach involving the credit and debit card purchases of hundreds of thousands of American consumers. The scope of the damage to Americans' privacy resulting from this breach remains unknown, but many believe that this breach has put thousands of U.S. consumers at risk of identity theft.

These data security breaches are compelling examples of why we need strong federal data privacy and security laws to help prevent identity theft. Last month, Senator Specter and I reintroduced our Personal Data Privacy and Security Act, S. 495, a comprehensive data privacy bill to protect Americans' sensitive personal information. While Senator Specter and I certainly do not have a monopoly on good ideas to solve the serious problems of identity theft and lax data security, we have put forth some very meaningful solutions to this problem in this bill. I hope that the Senate will pass this bill this year.

Today, Americans live in a world where, with just a few keystrokes on a computer, their most sensitive personal information can be accessed and sold to the highest bidder. Yet, our privacy laws lag behind the capabilities both of today's technology and the cunning of identity thieves. This is an important issue for this Committee to examine and I look forward to exploring ideas about how to best address the problem of identity theft.

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