

House Financial Services Committee to review data security concerns at government agencies

February 13, 2007

Panel accepts Bachus proposal to exercise Committee oversight

During its first full markup of the 110th Congress, the House Financial Services Committee accepted an amended version of a proposal offered by Ranking Member Spencer Bachus (R-6th., Alabama) to extend the panel's oversight activities to include major data security breaches at government agencies.

The proposal was partially inspired by reports that the personal information of 535,000 citizens and 1.3 million doctors may have been compromised due to a computer hard drive missing from the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Birmingham, Alabama. This follows a well-publicized May 2006 incident in which a laptop containing sensitive information about 28.6 million veterans and active duty service members was stolen from the home of a Department of Veterans Affairs employee.

"This problem goes beyond this agency or these incidents," Rep. Bachus said, noting that problems have also been reported at the Department of Justice, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Federal Trade Commission, the Government Accountability Office, the Congressional Budget Office, and the Internal Revenue Service. "Because stolen or missing data can be used to commit acts of financial fraud, the House Financial Services Committee has an appropriate oversight role to play in this area."

As adopted, Rep. Bachus's proposal calls upon the Committee to "examine major data security breaches at government agencies to ensure that personal financial information is properly safeguarded and that the affected individuals receive prompt notification where that is appropriate."

"Our citizens — whether they are veterans, federal taxpayers, Medicare patients, healthcare providers, or Social Security recipients — need to have absolute confidence that personal information retained by the United States Government is treated in a safe and secure manner," Rep. Bachus stated.

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