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Congressman John Barrow Calls for Fast Passage of “Veterans Identity Protection Act”

Signs on as cosponsor of legislation that immediately responds to the VA’s loss of 26.5 million personal records; provides free credit reports and monitoring to help the affected vets avoid potential fraud

Washington, DC – Calling the Department of Veterans Affairs’ recent loss of personal identification records for 26.5 million veterans a “careless and colossal screw up” that demands immediate action from Congress, 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) today signed on as a cosponsor of a bill that would provide free credit reports and credit monitoring for the millions of veterans now at risk of identity theft.

“Some government bureaucrat in the VA is guilty of a careless and colossal screw up,” Barrow said. “And now, millions of veterans are at risk of identity theft. Congress cannot afford to drag its feet – we have to respond to this. Quick action is necessary if we’re going to make sure this situation doesn’t get any worse than it already is.”

“I also think there needs to be a larger investigation that looks into staffing and management at the VA,” Barrow continued. “A situation like this is often the symptom of a larger problem, and we owe it to our veterans to make sure that the VA is properly run so that it meets their needs and protects their security.”

If passed by Congress, the **Veterans Identity Protection Act of 2006** (H.R. 5455) would provide one year of free credit monitoring to any individual whose personal identification information was stolen. It would also provide those veterans with one free credit report each year for two years after the end of credit monitoring, in addition to the free credit report available under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Any veteran who has questions and concerns about the situation, or wants to learn more about consumer identity protections, should call **800-FED INFO (333-4636)**, where a manned call center has been set up by the Department of Veterans Affairs and will operate from 8 am to 9 pm (EDT), Monday-Saturday, as long as it is needed. The call center will be able to handle up to 20,000 calls per hour (260,000 calls per day). Additionally, veterans can also log on to www.firstgov.gov and www.va.gov/opa for 24 hour assistance and information.

For any additional information, please call Congressman Barrow’s office toll free at **866-890-6236**.

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