

Another example of the abuse of the Social Security number is a provision in tax law requiring a spouse paying alimony furnish the IRS with the Social Security number of the spouse receiving alimony.

There are not isolated incidents; in fact, since the creation of the Social Security number in 1934 there have been almost 40 congressionally-authorized uses of the Social Security number as an identification number for non-Social Security programs! Abuse of the Social Security system also occurs at the state level. Mr. Speaker, in many states. One cannot get a driver's license, apply for a job, or even receive a birth certificate for one's child, without presenting their Social Security number to a government official, and just X weeks ago 210 of my colleagues voted to allow States to require citizens to show their Social Security number in order to vote. Since the Social Security number is part of a federal program created by Congress, it is Congress' responsibility to ensure it is not used to violate the privacy of America's citizens.

Perhaps the most disturbing abuses of the Social Security number is the Congressionally-authorized rule forcing parents to get a Social Security number for their newborn children in order to claim them as a dependent. Mr. Speaker, forcing parents to register their newborn children with the state is more like something out of the nightmare of George Orwell than the dreams of a free Republic that inspired the nation's founders.

Unless the abuses of the Social Security number is stopped, Americans will soon have a de facto national identification number, which would provide the federal government the ability to track all citizens from cradle to grave. The drafters of the Constitution would be horrified if they knew that the federal government would have the ability to set up a universal identifier and every newborn baby had to be assigned a number by the federal government. I therefore urge my colleagues to protect America's freedom by cosponsoring the Privacy Protection Act of 1998.

IN HONOR OF ROCKY RIVER
BASKETBALL COURTS

HON. DENNIS J. KUCINICH

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 25, 1998

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mike McLaren and the players at the Rocky River courts in Rocky River, Ohio.

Chris Ballard, the author of Hoops Nation, recently toured the country looking for the best basketball courts and pickup games around. I am pleased to announce that Ballard features the Rocky River Courts in Rocky River, Ohio among America's top five basketball courts. NBA greats Danny Ferry and John Amaechi must agree since they play there regularly. The following is Ballard's description of the Rocky River Courts:

Take well-organized yuppie ball out of the health clubs, dump it on a court in a wealthy suburb of Cleveland, and you've got Rocky River, a magnet for Ohio's most talented gym rats. Mike McLaren, a local hoops junkie, has been organizing the games for 20 years, setting up teams and court rotations and keeping the slug fests to a minimum. Until City Hall

runs the players out of town, as it's been threatening to do for years, McLaren's legions will be playing in fair and foul weather.

CONGRESS AND THE INTERNET

HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 25, 1998

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I would like to insert my Washington Report for Wednesday, February 18, 1998 into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

CONGRESS AND THE INTERNET

The Internet is transforming American society. It is having a profound effect on our government institutions and our economy and how we communicate with each other and with the rest of the world. About 40 million people used the Internet in 1996, and that number is expected to rise to about 200 million by 1999.

The Internet is a global network of computers linked by phone and cable lines. It began in 1969 as a Defense Department initiative to link a handful of universities, research laboratories and military bases, and has now become ubiquitous. Individuals can access the Internet from personal computers at home or at work, at schools or in the library. The Internet is a means of disseminating information and, increasingly, a way to conduct business.

Congress is struggling to define what role government should play in the Internet. The Internet is a wide-open forum with few rules and regulations. It is not owned by anyone, and it is not confined by geographical borders. This very openness is the great strength of the Internet, facilitating the free exchange of information and ideas around the world. It is also a source of concern. For example, some of the most profitable web sites on the Internet are devoted to gambling and pornography. Some in Congress have urged aggressive regulation of the Internet, while others have urged minimal government involvement.

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

The Internet has had a dramatic effect on how the average citizen interacts with the federal government. First, individuals now have greater access to information about government. Federal agencies have web sites which usually describe key programs and initiatives and help citizens get answers to commonly asked questions, such as how to apply for a job or how to get benefits. Second, the Internet has made it easier for citizens to communicate with their elected representatives. About 4000 people have contacted my web site in the last year, and many constituents now send e-mail messages to my office. Third, the Internet provides a wide-range of fora for citizens to debate and discuss political issues, from 3-mails and chat rooms to ideologically-oriented web sites.

The Internet has also revolutionized media coverage of Washington. When I first came to Congress in the mid-1960s, most Americans got their news on current events from the morning paper and the evening news. Today, media coverage is almost non-stop, and the Internet has contributed to this trend. For example, the Monica Lewinsky story first broke on a web site, and several news outlets have provided round-the-clock reporting on the scandal from their web sites. Some would say the Internet is feeding the public's appetite for information. Others

would argue that it has lowered media standards, opening the floodgates to unrestrained speculation.

AREAS OF POSSIBLE REGULATION

Congress will focus its legislative efforts on the Internet in four basic areas. First, it will consider various consumer protection bills, including measures to restrict junk e-mail, protect the privacy of personal information in government databases, and, most importantly, limit pornography and gambling on the Internet. Congress passed legislation in 1996 making it a crime to knowingly send or display indecent material over the Internet, but the Supreme Court invalidated the law on free speech grounds. Supporters say restrictions are necessary to limit access by minors to such materials. Opponents respond that parents, not the government, should control what their children see, that most Internet providers, such as America Online and Prodigy, already give parents and schools the tools to screen out offensive materials, and that regulating pornography will be difficult because U.S. laws don't reach web sites established overseas. We want to protect children from inappropriate material, but we also want to protect the exploding commercial potential of the Internet.

Second, Congress will debate measures relating to taxation of Internet commerce. One recent study estimated that the value of goods and services traded over the Internet will grow from \$8 billion in 1997 to \$327 billion in 2002. Those figures do not include consumers who are increasingly shopping on the Internet as they become more comfortable with the technology and more aware of the protections against credit card fraud. Many state and local governments, concerned about the shift of commerce to the Internet, want to impose taxes on Internet transactions. The challenge is determining which jurisdiction should levy the taxes, or whether state and local governments should be allowed to tax Internet commerce at all.

Third, Congress will consider bills involving the export of encryption, which is data scrambling technology used to prevent unauthorized access to electronic data on the Internet. Encryption, for example, may be used to secure credit card purchases over the Internet, or to restrict access to certain government web sites. The encryption issue is very contentious. Bills have been introduced to ease restrictions on the export of encryption products so that U.S. manufacturers are on a level playing field with their overseas competitors. The White House, however, has opposed relaxing export controls because of concerns that widespread use of sophisticated encryption will hamper law enforcement and intelligence gathering.

Fourth, Congress is reviewing the issue of trademark protection. Currently, the government has contracted with a private entity to assign web site names. Problems arise when entrepreneurs grab an address that is clearly identified with a well-known brand name or even with a governmental entity. Some argue the federal government should plan an enhanced role in resolving trademark disputes, while others favor referring such disputes to an international organization because the Internet transcends national boundaries.

CONCLUSION

The federal government has a legitimate role to play in Internet governance, particularly where interstate commerce, trade and law enforcement are involved. I do believe, however, that Congress should proceed with caution as it debates measures to regulate the Internet. I favor a minimum of regulation, but there are some things, like child molesters who get information from the Internet, that simply cannot be ignored. The