

Security number. HR 3218 will help protect millions of Americans from the devastating crime of identity theft, which is a growing problem in my district and throughout the country.

This bill will be partially helpful to senior citizens who rely on Social Security. These seniors could lose a lifetime's worth of savings if a criminal obtained their Social Security number. We owe it to America's senior citizens to make sure that they are not exposed to the risk of identity theft as a price of receiving their Social Security benefits.

While this bill does represent a good step toward protecting privacy, I would remind my colleagues that much more needs to be done to ensure the Social Security number is not used as means of facilitating identity crimes. The increasing prevalence of identity theft is directly related to the use of the Social Security number as a uniform identifier.

For all intents and purposes, the Social Security number is already a national identification number. Today, in the majority of states, no American can get a job, open a bank account, get a drivers' license, or receive a birth certificate for one's child without presenting their Social Security number. So widespread has the use of the Social Security number become that a member of my staff had to produce a Social Security number in order to get a fishing license!

Unscrupulous people have found ways to exploit this system and steal another's identity—the ubiquity of the Social Security number paved the way for these very predictable abuses and crimes. Congress must undo the tremendous injury done to the people's privacy and security by the federal government's various mandates which transformed the Social Security number into a universal identifier.

In order to stop the disturbing trend toward the use of the Social Security number as a uniform ID I have introduced the Freedom and Privacy Restoration Act (HR 220), which forbids the use of the Social Security number for purposes not related to Social Security. The Freedom and Privacy Restoration Act also contains a blanket prohibition on the use of identifiers to "investigate, monitor, oversee, or otherwise regulate" American citizens. Mr. Speaker, prohibiting the Federal Government from using standard identifiers will help protect Americans from both private and public sector criminals.

While much of the discussion of identity theft and related threats to privacy has concerned private sector criminals, the major threat to privacy lies in the power uniform identifiers give to government officials. I am sure I need not remind my colleagues of the sad history of government officials of both parties using personal information contained in IRS or FBI files against their political enemies, or of the cases of government officials rummaging through the confidential files of celebrities and/or their personal acquaintances, or of the Medicare clerk who sold confidential data about Medicare patients to a Health Maintenance Organization. After considering these cases, one cannot help but shudder at the potential for abuse if an unscrupulous government official is able to access one's complete medical, credit, and employment history by simply typing the citizens' "uniform identifier" into a database.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I enthusiastically join in supporting HR 3218 which will help protect millions of senior citizens and other Americans from identity theft by strengthening the confidentiality of the Social Security number. I also urge my colleagues to protect all Americans from the threat of national identifiers by supporting my Freedom and Privacy Restoration Act.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. THOMAS M. BARRETT

OF WISCONSIN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 2000

Mr. BARRETT of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to vote earlier this evening on measures before the House because I was in transit to Washington from Wisconsin. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye" on rollcall No. 531, concerning a resolution (H. Res. 631) honoring the members of the crew of the guided missile destroyer U.S.S. *Cole*. I would have voted "aye" on Rollcall No. 532, concerning a resolution (H. Con. Res. 415) expressing the sense of the Congress that there should be established a National Children's Memorial Day. I would have voted "aye" on rollcall No. 533, concerning the Social Security Number Confidentiality Act (H.R. 3218).

HONORING MS. RHONDA GERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF AID TO VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, October 18, 2000

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, today I recognize and pay tribute to Rhonda Gerson, Executive Director of Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse, for her service on behalf of domestic violence victims.

A 1998 report by the U.S. Department of Justice indicates that the rate of domestic violence in many categories has been declining over the past decade. I believe the downward trend is directly attributable to the outreach efforts by such individuals as Rhonda Gerson.

Ms. Gerson has been the Executive Director of Aid to Victims of Domestic Abuse since 1981. For the first five years, she served in this capacity without ever receiving a paycheck. During her time with the agency, Ms. Gerson has advocated for the safety of battered women on a local, state and national level.

In the early 1980s, Ms. Gerson served on a Houston Police Department (HPD) task force to review its domestic violence policy, and, in the late 1980s, she served on a second task force, which resulted in the creation of the HPD Family Violence Unit. In 1984, Ms. Gerson co-chaired a pilot project at the Harris County District Attorney's Office that ultimately developed into the Family Criminal Law Division. In 1987, the National Council of Jewish Women—Greater Houston Section awarded

her the Hannah G. Solomon Award as a result of her leadership and action for social change in the area of domestic violence victims/survivors.

Ms. Gerson was actively involved with the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV), and from 1989 to 1994, she was the chair of the Board of Directors. Under her leadership, TCFV grew to be the largest state coalition in the country due to it stepping up to the plate and re-opening the National Domestic Violence Hotline when its closure stunned the domestic violence community.

According to Deborah Tucker, current Executive Director of the National Training Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence and former Executive Director of TCFV, Ms. Gerson was an integral part of the Public Policy Committee for TCFV and made an incredible contribution to the laws and policies designed to better protect battered women and to hold offenders accountable. When asked to describe Ms. Gerson's accomplishments, Ms. Tucker said, "I think she is a person who is capable of both seeing the big picture and of noticing the impact that public policy initiatives and programs might have on one individual. Her sensitivity and native intelligence are among the most developed of any persons I have known. She stands out in a quiet and deliberate way, through hard work and thoughtful consideration of the complexities involved in human behavior."

In 1993, Ms. Gerson was appointed by Supreme Court Justice Tom Phillips as a member of the Texas team to attend the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Conference on confronting violence in the family. She was a leader in the effort to create the Harris County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, for which she has served as Treasurer of the Board since 1997.

In 1998, Ms. Gerson helped found the National Training Center on Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence, and she currently serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors. In only two years, she has helped the agency to grow to six staff members and an operating budget of over \$600,000.

Mr. Speaker, many victims of domestic violence have been touched by Rhonda Gerson's compassionate spirit. I ask my colleagues to join with me in commending Ms. Gerson for a lifetime of dedication and commitment to the Houston community and to all victims of domestic violence.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER CONFIDENTIALITY ACT OF 1999

SPEECH OF

HON. DAN BURTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 17, 2000

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I submit the following exchange of letters between myself and Chairman ARCHER regarding H.R. 3218: