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Recent Cases Highlight Need for Identity Theft Protection
Bill Moving Through State Senate

Recent cases of Identity Theft are highlighting the need for better state protections against this increasing crime, according to the Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG). This week, an identity thief was sentenced in Juneau. One of her victims was an expectant mother on maternity leave. A larger ring of fraud is set to be announced by Fairbanks police today. They estimate 500 victims with a total loss reaching \$500,000. The thieves stole personal information and other material, such as Permanent Fund dividend checks, other checks and credit card statements.

"These cases clearly show that Alaskans need better protection from this type of crime," stated Steve Cleary, AkPIRG Director. "The average victim of Identity Theft loses over \$1,000 and is forced to spend roughly 175 hours clearing their name after the fact. SB 222 will not only help protect consumers from Identity Theft, but will help them clear their name if they are victimized," Cleary continued.

Senate Bill 222 (SB 222) is co-sponsored by Senators Therriault and Guess. It is the result of bi-partisan effort begun in the last legislative session. Among its provisions are two measures that many states have taken to protect consumers. The bill mandates notification of security breaches so companies and other entities will have to disclose if private, financial information is leaked. In addition, the bill allows consumers to freeze their credit report, minimizing the damage that Identity Thieves can inflict.

SB 222 passed unanimously from the Senate Labor and Commerce committee on February 14th and moves next to the Senate Judiciary committee.