

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE March 17th, 2006  
Contact: Steve Cleary - AkPIRG - 907-278-3661  
Ed Mierzwinski - USPIRG - 202-546-9707

US House Committee Actions Imperil Consumer Protections in Alaska  
Federal Bill Would Preempt State Protections  
AkPIRG Calls on AK Legislators to Voice Concerns  
to Alaska Delegation

The House Financial Services Committee voted on Thursday to repeal strict state notification and credit freeze laws that have helped to protect consumers from identity theft and financial fraud. The proposed federal law would preempt the strong consumer protections in Alaska Senate Bill 222 (SB 222), which unanimously passed its second Senate committee this week.

"SB 222 has been a hallmark of bi-partisan collaboration that will strongly protect Alaskan consumers. Senators Therriault and Guess have worked tirelessly to craft this bill," stated AkPIRG's Steve Cleary. "It would be a true disservice to have the Federal government step in and weaken these protections."

SB 222 will, like other laws across the nation, provide essential protections that allow consumers to prevent identity theft from opening credit accounts in their names and require companies to inform consumers when their personal data - such as their Social Security and credit card numbers - have been compromised.

"This is just the first step in the legislative process, and other committees have jurisdiction over this issue," state Ed Mierzwinski, Consumer Program Director for USPIRG. "Ideally, this bill will not become law and states will continue to innovate in the area of identity theft and privacy protections," Mierzwinski continued.

AkPIRG is contacting state legislators to alert them to this preemption and urge them to contact the Alaska congressional delegation to stop this federal action to weaken state laws.