
(February 3, 2006) On The Hill: Lawmakers Set Sights On Protecting Cellular Privacy

February 3, 2006

Technology Daily (online)

Michael Martinez

http://nationaljournal.com/cgi-bin/ifetch4?ENG+TECHNOLOGY_DAILY_ALL-_-POLL_TRACK-_-AD_SPOTLIGHT+7-techdailyindex+1163278-REVERSE+0+1+620+F+1+3+1+lipinski

On The Hill: Lawmakers Set Sights On Protecting Cellular Privacy

Lawmakers this week introduced a series of bills designed to curb the sale of telephone records over the Internet. Other new technology-related measures focus on fostering innovation, modernizing voting systems and bolstering homeland security.

A few new bills were filed in response to recent reports of online businesses selling customers' cellular phone records. Rep. Daniel Lipinski, D-Ill., filed a measure, H.R. 4657, that would make it a federal crime to sell private phone records. "The sale of this information is especially dangerous for law enforcement personnel working undercover and for people victimized by stalkers, such as battered women," Lipinski said in a statement.

Two related House bills, H.R. 4662 and H.R. 4678, also were introduced, and Senate measure, S. 2177, was filed last month. The Senate legislation would double penalties for violations occurring within a year if they involve more than \$100,000 or more than 50 customers.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee on Wednesday held a hearing on the subject. FCC Chairman Kevin Martin urged the panel to tighten laws protecting phone records and to enhance his agency's authority to levy penalties. "The disclosure of consumers' private calling records is a significant privacy invasion," Martin said in written testimony.

Illinois Democrat Jan Schakowsky, the author of H.R. 4678 and another witness at the hearing, told the committee to work quickly to plug what she called a "legal loophole." "It is time to tell phone call brokers that getting into our private business is not going to be the bread and butter of their business," she said in written testimony.