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Protecting your Personal Information

Last week, we discovered that 2,340 Minnesota consumers likely were among the 145,000 consumers that may have been exposed to identity theft due to a massive data breach at ChoicePoint, Inc. The Atlanta company is a spin-off Equifax, Inc., one of the three major credit reporting agencies; ChoicePoint has 19 billion records in its database.

Unfortunately, ChoicePoint initially only disclosed that the personal information was stolen to the California residents affected; California is the only

state in the nation that requires disclosure of such security issues that could potentially leave victims vulnerable to identity theft.

That is why I am working with Minnesota Attorney General Mike Hatch on the Security Breach Disclosure Act, which will require that consumers whose personal information has been stolen be notified when such events occur. The bill will be introduced in the House this week.

Education Bills I am Working On

Last week, a bill I authored to make improve the accountability and responsiveness of the Minneapolis school board elections (HF295) passed unanimously out of the Civil Law and Elections Committee. HF295 would adjust the makeup of the Minneapolis School District from having 7 members, each elected at large, to a 9 member board with 6 elected from districts corresponding with Minneapolis Park Board District and 3 members elected at-large. The change would be enacted for the 2006 school board elections. I believe the adjustment would give voice to constituents and make these elected officials more accessible to voters.

I have also sponsored legislation to make adjustments in the process for teacher tenure (HF1180). It would allow school districts and the unions the ability to negotiate seniority in the event of lay-offs, allowing for greater flexibility and increased local control in

order to better meet the needs of the students and the district. Both the Minneapolis district and the Minneapolis teachers' union have expressed a willingness to negotiate over these issues if this legislation passes.

On Friday, I joined a bipartisan group of state education leaders to announce legislation that would offer more state support for public school students and classrooms. The legislation would put an additional \$750 million in K-12 education by increasing per pupil funding by five percent, \$250 more each year of this biennium. It is time for the state to renew its commitment to education and stop the downward spiral of increasing class sizes and cuts to educational options such as arts, music and language classes. I believe this bill, which will be introduced this week, is a step in the right direction.

Tax Time is Here! Don't Forget Minnesota's State Tax Checkoff

Minnesota Elections Campaign Fund

Minnesota's system for publicly financing campaigns is one of the most innovative in the country. Candidates can voluntarily abide by spending limits, thus qualify for public funding, maximize their fundraising in very small amounts from "regular" people and minimize the necessity of funds from "traditional" sources. To support the Minnesota Elections Campaign Fund, please remember (or remind your tax preparer) to indicate your party designation on your tax form (this does not increase your tax or reduce your refund).

Nongame Wildlife Checkoff Fund

The Nongame Wildlife Checkoff found on state income tax forms supports almost 80% of the DNR nongame Wildlife Program, which works to protect nongame wildlife in Minnesota threatened by habitat loss, unlawful killing or other environmental threats. The program's list of successes includes protection of Bald Eagles and Minnesota's state bird, the Common Loon. Look for the loon on your state tax form and write in your contribution. It's easy, it's fast, and it's tax deductible!

Online constituent survey

My annual survey of issues coming before this year's legislature is once again available on my House website. Please take a few minutes to answer the questions in this interactive survey:

<http://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/survey/62A.asp>

I value your opinion and thank you for your input.

