

Washington, D.C. - The U.S. House of Representatives today approved a resolution sponsored by Congressman David Price (D-NC) to raise awareness of the importance of data privacy protection. In an age of increased electronic communications and the popularity of social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, Price believes it is extremely important for Americans to know how to protect their personal information.

"The way we communicate with one another has been revolutionized by advances in networking technologies," Price said. "At the same time, we must recognize that as it becomes much easier to communicate, we must be vigilant in protecting our personal information. And specifically, young people who are participating in social networking sites should be made aware of the dangers of failing to protect their personal data. They need to know that not everyone on Facebook and MySpace is a friend."

The resolution, H. Res. 31, would designate this Wednesday, January 28, 2009, as "National Data Privacy Day." A number of states, including North Carolina, Washington, Oregon, Massachusetts, and California, will also recognize Data Privacy Day on Wednesday.

Educators and privacy professionals across the country will be leading discussions with pre-teens, teens and young adults about privacy and data protection, focusing on social networking websites like Facebook and MySpace. The vast majority of American teens use the Internet, and over half of those between 12 and 17 who are online use social networks. While pre-teens, teenagers and young adults are often the most sophisticated and skilled Internet users, many too often neglect their personal safety online, Price said.

Privacy experts encourage teens to remember the following tips when using social networking websites:

- Be aware that anyone – including advertisers, potential employers, and even dangerous people – can access, use and forward information you share online.
- Use privacy settings to control access to your information online, and do not share phone numbers, home address, date of birth, school or team name, travel plans, identification numbers and financial information. Don't share your password with anyone.
- Don't accept "friends" whom you do not know, and never agree to meet anyone in person you have only "met" online.
- Do not post any information, photos or video that you would not share with your college,

prospective employer or your parents. Ask friends to take down content that you would not post yourself.

This week, the Carolina Privacy Officials Network will host panels on consent policy options in health care, information security breaches and off-shoring of data. At the Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke University, representatives from Intel, the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions, the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, the Office of the Provost of Duke University, the Duke Center for European Studies, the Center for International Studies, and the Triangle Institute for Security Studies will gather with officials from the United States Departments of State, Justice and Homeland Security as well as the European Commission to discuss issues surrounding the protection of national security and privacy.

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