

**Washington, D.C.** - The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it has recovered a stolen computer containing the personal information of approximately 26.5 million veterans and over 2 million active duty military, National Guard, and Reserve personnel. The computer, which was stolen from the home of a VA employee, contained names, dates of birth, and social security numbers of these veterans and military personnel. According to the FBI, a preliminary analysis indicates that none of the personal information on the computer's hard drive was accessed during the time in which the computer was not in the VA's custody.

Although this news leads me to believe that none of the records have been misused, I would still urge veterans and military personnel to be vigilant about any unusual activities in their banking and credit/debit card records and to immediately act upon any indication of identity theft.

The VA has established a call center for veterans and service members to obtain more information about the situation, and to learn more about identity protection. You may call the VA's toll-free hotline at 1-800-FED-INFO (333-4636). It is now open and operating between the hours of 8am and 9pm (Eastern Daylight Time), Monday through Saturday. Information relating to the prevention of identify theft also is available at <http://www.militaryonesource.com> .

While it appears that we have avoided the worst potential outcomes, this incident clearly exposes significant flaws and weaknesses in the policies and security protocols the VA currently has in place to protect sensitive data. The House Government Reform Committee, which produces information security report cards for all federal government agencies each year, has issued the VA an "F" for four of the last five years. Until the VA begins to take information security more seriously, there is a significant risk that it will remain vulnerable to more incidents like this recent data theft. To address the deficiencies in VA information security, I am a cosponsor of H.R. 5588, legislation that would require major policy changes at the VA, including the establishment of a VA Ombudsman for Data Security. The legislation would also require free credit monitoring services for any veteran whose personal data is or has been stolen from the VA.

I encourage veterans and military personnel who suspect they may be victims of identity theft or who encounter any other problems related to the Veterans Administration to contact my office by clicking [here](#).

# Announcement on the Stolen Data from the VA

July 21, 2006

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