

# MATSUI HOSTS IDENTITY THEFT FORUM

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Sacramento, CA &ndash; Congresswoman Doris O. Matsui (CA-5) hosted an identity theft forum to educate Sacramentans about identity theft &ndash; one of the fastest growing crimes in the nation &ndash; including how to protect yourself and how to respond.

&ldquo;Sadly identity theft is on the rise and this is an issue that can affect anyone &ndash; regardless of where you live, your level of income, the job you hold, or your age,&rdquo; said Matsui. &ldquo;Like all crimes identity theft is not entirely preventable but, you can minimize your risk of being a victim of identity theft. I was pleased to bring in experts, to educate the public on how not to be a victim.&rdquo;

Last year in Sacramento nearly one thousand people were victims of identity theft, with more than 40,000 in California. In February the Federal Trade Commission released its annual report detailing consumer complaints about identity theft and listing the top ten categories of fraud-related complaints filed with the FTC in 2004. For the fifth year in a row, identity theft topped the list of complaints, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the 635,173 consumer fraud complaints filed with the agency last year.

By managing personal information cautiously and with an awareness of the issue, people can guard against identity theft. During the forum several tips were discussed to minimize an individual&rsquo;s risk including not giving out personal information on the phone, through the mail or over the Internet unless you&rsquo;ve initiated the contact or are certain with whom you are working; not carrying your Social Security card, keep it in a secure place; and tear or shred your charge receipts, copies of credit applications, insurance forms, checks and bank statements, and expired credit cards. Additionally, information was provided on what to do, should an individual be the victim of identity theft. For example, close the fraudulent accounts, ensure your credit report is correct, and file a police report.

Congresswoman Matsui supports several pieces of legislation that would work to reduce identity theft. One piece of legislation, H.R. 1078, would protect an individual&rsquo;s Social Security number and make it a crime to buy or sell that number. Further the Congresswoman supports legislation that would regulate information brokers &ndash; those that maintain and sell lists of personal information to companies that offer opportunities for such items as credit cards, housing, and magazines.

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