



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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WHITE ANNOUNCES NEW INITIATIVE TO PROTECT AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT

Secretary of State Jesse White announced today that his office would begin verifying Social Security numbers for all drivers licenses and ID cards in June. White said the process is another step to protect the public against identity theft and fraud.

“Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States,” White said. “We want to take every step possible to protect Illinois citizens and the integrity of our drivers licenses and ID cards.

“State issued drivers licenses and ID cards are the most widely used forms of identification in the country. That puts our office on the front lines of defense against identity theft and fraud. Verifying numbers with the Social Security Administration will help eliminate fraud at our facilities. This extra security measure is a benefit to law enforcement, consumers and businesses.”

White said that 96 percent of all records in the state’s drivers license and ID card databases have already been confirmed with the Social Security Administration (SSA). Four percent of records did not match correctly with the SSA. Letters and renewal notices for motorists and citizens whose records did not match are being sent advising them to bring documentation to verify their Social Security Number, name and date of birth. All drivers licenses and ID cards for first-time applicants will be verified before they are issued as well.

White urged motorists receiving those notices to visit a facility as soon as possible. If records need to be corrected with the SSA, the process could take up to four weeks. Drivers licenses and ID cards will not be issued until the Social Security Number can be verified.

The cost of the Social Security Online Verification program is covered by a \$540,000 federal grant. Social Security Online Verification is one of many security efforts employed by the Secretary of State’s office to prevent identity theft. The office uses facial recognition programs that compare digital photographs of motorists. White has also adopted more stringent identification document requirements and no longer prints the social security number on drivers licenses and ID cards.

Identity theft is a top concern among consumers contacting the Federal Trade Commission (FTC):

- Last year the FTC received more than 300,000 complaints of consumer fraud and more than 200,000 complaints of identity theft.
- Consumer fraud complaints rose from 134,000 in 2001 to 300,000 last year.
- Identity theft complaints increased from 86,000 on 2001 to 214,000 last year.
- Consumers reported losses from fraud of more than \$400 million last year.

“On average, a victim will spend \$500 and 30 hours recovering from identity theft and

According to a study conducted by the FTC, 15 percent of identity theft victims reported that their personal information was misused in non-financial ways. The most common such use reported was to present the victim's name and identifying information when someone was stopped by law enforcement officials or was charged with a crime.

White said more information about the Social Security verification program and about identity theft is available through his office or on his website, www.cyberdriveillinois.com. White said people who are concerned that they may have been a victim of identity theft should:

1. Report the identity theft to the police. Ask for a copy of the report to show your creditors and financial institutions if necessary.
2. Contact each of the three major credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian, and Trans Union) and report the theft to their fraud units. Ask each agency to put a "fraud alert" in your file and contact you before allowing new accounts to be opened or existing accounts to be changed. Request reports from each agency, and review them carefully. After a few months, request new reports to make sure they are correct.
 - Equifax: 1-800-525-6285
 - Experian: 1-888-397-3742
 - Trans Union: 1-800-680-7289
3. Call your creditors and financial institutions. Close all accounts that have been opened or accessed by identity thieves. Ask for passwords to secure new accounts.
4. Contact the Social Security Fraud Line at 1-800-269-0271
5. File your complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC maintains a database of identity theft cases used by law enforcement agencies for investigations. Filing a complaint also helps us learn more about identity theft and the problems victims are having so that we can better assist you.