



THE MISSOURI SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

MINORITY FLOOR LEADER SEN. MAIDA COLEMAN

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Democrats Address Identity Theft, Consumer Protection and Privacy Issues

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Senate Democrats unveiled a block of legislation today aimed at protecting consumers from a broad range of privacy, consumer-protection and ethical issues.

The package, spearheaded by Sen. Pat Dougherty (St. Louis), highlights three consumer-protection issues that deal with identity theft, state privatization and privacy issues.

“The environment for consumers in Missouri has moved from ‘buyer beware’ to ‘buyer be scared,’” Sen. Dougherty said. “My office has received so many calls, letters and emails about these issues and others including insurance fraud and credit report abuses that we decided to push this particular package of legislation.”

The first bill, sponsored by Sen. Dougherty, involves the collection and use of personal information by companies such as Choice Point. This data collection corporation sold information about 500,000 citizens nationwide to various fake companies, including criminal enterprises.

“Choice Point’s recent problems have highlighted the need for the state to take notice of Missouri’s susceptible consumers,” Sen. Dougherty said. “Several Democrats and I have filed legislation today that will keep critical, private information about Missourians from falling into the wrong hands into the future.”

The second highlighted bill involves state government privatization. The bill creates an Office of the Inspector General that would oversee all privatization efforts by the state of Missouri.

“Nothing will hurt Missouri consumers more than having essential public services sold off to profiteers who will not deliver a quality service and will charge citizens exorbitant prices. At a time when we are looking for more efficient government and the possible privatization of some services, we need a watchdog for the taxpayers of this state,” Sen. Dougherty said.

The third highlighted bill, sponsored by Sen. Maida Coleman, attacks the problem of privacy and would require any product that contains a radio frequency identification tag (RFIT) to be disclosed to consumers.

RFIT can be applied to almost any physical item, from t-shirts to mouthwash bottles. Any tagged item would carry its own unique information in the form of an embedded chip that sends out an identification signal allowing it to communicate with reader devices and other products embedded with similar chips.

Every product would actually be assigned a unique number enabling companies to determine the whereabouts of all of their products all of the time. Marketers already openly envision monitoring consumers' use of products within their homes.

“While radio frequency technology may help businesses track merchandise from production to purchase, many fear that the technology will be used to spy on consumers,” Sen. Coleman said.

A list of the caucus' consumer-protection bills is attached. Details are listed on the caucus website at www.missourihelp.com.
