**STOP ERRORS IN CREDIT USE AND REPORTING (SECURE) ACT OF 2015**

Consumers are reeling from news that a data breach at Equifax, one of the big three credit reporting agencies, has compromised the personal information of 143 million people. The data included customers’ names, Social Security numbers, birthdates, addresses, driver’s license numbers, and for some consumers, credit card numbers. These data could easily be used by criminals to steal people’s identity or commit fraud.

The impact on consumers whose data has been stolen is potentially devastating. As a result of identity theft and fraud, customers face the risk of having debt accrued in their name. They could suffer long-lasting damage to their credit, and as a result, they could be denied loans, mortgages, employment, or even rental housing. To resolve the damage done by this data breach, they will likely spend months if not years trying to resolve resulting errors and problems with their financial records.

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), credit reporting agencies (CRAs) are required to “follow **reasonable procedures to assure maximum possible accuracy**” of information contained in credit reports, but not only do reports contain far too many preventable errors but consumers find themselves trapped in a maze of dispute procedures and feel powerless to stop incorrect information from ruining their lives.

The *Stop Errors in Credit Use and Reporting (SECURE) Act of 2017* would help consumers impacted by the recent data breach by making it easier to catch and resolve identity theft, fraud, and errors in their credit reports. The bill would:

1. make credit reports more accurate from the beginning;
2. enable parents to protect their children from identity theft;
3. ensure that consumers are heard when they dispute information in their credit report;
4. provide consumers with a free, meaningful credit score once a year;
5. require CRAs and data furnishers to conduct meaningful investigations when consumers file disputes;
6. provide additional tools to agencies to adequately regulate and supervise credit reporting agencies; and
7. give consumers better legal tools to enforce their rights under the FCRA.

The *SECURE Act* provides:

Increased Requirements on CRAs and data furnishers

* Requires CRAs to pass along documentation sent by consumers to data furnishers and requires data furnishers to consider the documentation in their re-investigation;
* Requires CRAs to gather and report information on disputes and their resolution;
* Directs the CFPB to establish minimum procedures that a CRA must follow to ensure maximum possible accuracy of consumer reports;
* Prevents CRAs from ignoring new or additional information provided by a consumer that is relevant to an on-going dispute.

More Tools for Consumers

* Ensures that consumers get the information they need to understand their credit reports by enabling consumers to
  + understand how their credit report is being used and by whom,
  + identify and correct errors on their report, and
  + see the same information that is used by lenders to deny a consumer credit or increase interest rates;
* Provides consumers with access to meaningful credit scores free of charge annually; and
* Enables parents to place security freezes on their children’s credit reports to protect them from identity theft.

Regulatory Reforms

* Creates a national registry of CRAs so that consumers know which companies are collecting and disseminating information about them; and
* Directs the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study of existing public credit reporting systems and evaluate the feasibility, as well as the costs and benefits, of creating a national credit reporting system in the United States.

Legal Redress

* Provides for injunctive relief as a remedy for consumers who sue CRAs under the FCRA; and
* Holds CRAs accountable to the FTC for negligent violations of the FCRA.

The *SECURE Act* is cosponsored by Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Claire McCaskill (D-MO). It is supported by Consumers Union, the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC), the National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA), Demos, U.S. PIRG, and Consumer Action.