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For Immediate Release

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Washington D.C.- May 23, 2006 - Congressman John Murtha said today that the theft of personal data on more than 26 million veterans from the home of a Department of Veterans Affairs employee is outrageous.

"The VA should have had better internal safeguards in place," Murtha said. "It's unconscionable that the administration took 19 days to inform the veterans about this. What were they thinking? They knew the vets' personal information was not just lost, it was in the hands of criminals, and yet they waited over three weeks to tell them. I'm looking into how the government can be more proactive in helping these veterans, but all Americans should be extremely careful about protecting private information that could be expensive and time-consuming to correct if it falls into the wrong hands."

The VA is notifying those whose records have been compromised.

"I have specifically asked the VA if they would contact individuals' banks, but they do not believe it's necessary to contact financial institutions unless suspicious activity is detected," Murtha said.

Veterans should monitor their credit reports to check for unusual activity and check their bank and credit statements closely. Credit reports are available from Equifax at [www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com) (800-525-6285), Experian at [www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com) (888-397-3742) or TransUnion at [www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com) (800-680-7289). Reports also may be requested from [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) (877-322-8228), a central site to request reports for all three credit reporting agencies.

In addition, veterans with concerns can call the toll-free number provided by the VA for more information: 1-800-FED INFO (333-4636), between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday. The VA says the call center will be able to handle up to 20,000 calls per hour (260,000 calls per day).

Veterans can also visit the following websites which have information regarding this incident: [www.firstgov.gov](http://www.firstgov.gov) or [www.va.gov/opa](http://www.va.gov/opa).

If you think your identity has been stolen, contact one of the three credit reporting companies listed above to place a fraud alert on your credit report.

More information on identity theft is available at the Federal Trade Commission Web site at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov), where information also can be obtained to file a complaint.

In addition, Murtha has posted information on security safeguards on his Web site, [www.house.gov/murtha](http://www.house.gov/murtha) .