



U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON

Finance

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Opening Statement of Sen. Chuck Grassley, of Iowa
Senate Committee on Finance Oversight Hearing
"The Alias Among Us: The Homeland Security and Terrorism Threat from
Document Fraud, Identity Theft and Social Security Number Misuse"
Senate Dirksen Building, Room G-50
Tuesday, September 9, 2003

This hearing will come to order. Thank you all for coming.

I have called this Finance Committee oversight hearing to examine the problems of document fraud, identity theft and Social Security number misuse. We will also look into the implications for terrorism and homeland security.

Identity theft and document fraud is about more than just bad credit ratings or underage drinking. Let there be no doubt about it, identity theft and document fraud are a threat to our national security.

Two years ago, 19 hijackers attacked our nation in a suicide plot that killed thousands. These terrorists had lived among us, sometimes for years, leaving and entering the country repeatedly.

To plan, plot and carry out their mission, they needed valid identification. The hijackers used a variety of means to obtain identification, some of them even living under their own names.

Unfortunately, getting this cover was not much of a challenge, because we know they slipped on board airplanes and turned them into missiles.

We know there are sleeper cells still lurking in this country, plotting to harm us and providing support for future attacks. Some have been arrested, some are under surveillance, and I'm sure some are still at large.

Even in America's heartland, in my home state of Iowa, document fraud and identity theft and terrorism are a concern. Law enforcement officials in Iowa are seeing more and more document fraud and identity theft.

These terrorists are the alias among us, living openly but falsely, threatening our lives and our security. Identity theft and document fraud are far too easy to commit for us to be safe. Our national security is at stake, and our government needs to do more to protect us.

We have to face the fact that drivers licenses and the Social Security number have become the de facto national identifiers. Without these, you can't really function in our society. With

them, you can open a bank account, buy a gun, get a credit card, take flight lessons or board an airplane.

Our government recognizes the problem of identity theft and document fraud, but the question today, two years after the attacks of 9-11, is our government doing enough about the problem?

How safe are we? How easy is it to obtain valid identity documents under an alias? How secure is the Social Security number and the drivers license process? How easy is it to make counterfeit documents that work?

I don't think anyone here is going to like the answer. I know that I don't.

We have a lot of witnesses here today to testify and answer questions. Before we hear from our first panel, Senator Baucus will give his opening statement. After that, we will call up our first panel.