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THE PRESIDENT'S IDENTITY THEFT TASK FORCE
RELEASES COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PLAN
TO COMBAT IDENTITY THEFT

WASHINGTON - Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales and Federal Trade Commission Chairman Deborah Platt Majoras today announced the completion of the President's Identity Theft Task Force strategic plan to combat identity theft.

The strategic plan is the result of an unprecedented federal effort to formulate a comprehensive and fully coordinated plan to attack this widespread and destructive crime. The plan focuses on ways to improve the effectiveness of criminal prosecutions of identity theft; enhance data protection for sensitive consumer information maintained by the public sector, private sector, and consumers; provide more comprehensive and effective guidance for consumers and the business community; and improve recovery and assistance for consumers.

"Identity theft is a crime that goes far beyond the loss of money or property," said Attorney General Gonzales. "It is a personal invasion, done in secret, that can rob innocent men and women of their good names. The strategic plan we are releasing today is part of a comprehensive effort to fight this crime, protect consumers, and help victims put their lives back together."

"Identity theft is a blight on America's privacy and security landscape," said FTC Chairman Majoras. "Identity thieves steal consumers' time, money, and security, just as sure as they steal their identifying information, and they cost businesses enormous sums. The Strategic Plan submitted to the President provides a blueprint for increased federal prevention and protection."

Although much has been done to combat identity theft, the specific recommendations outlined in the Strategic Plan – from broad policy changes to small steps – are necessary to wage a more effective fight against identity theft and reduce its incidence and damage. Highlights of the recommendations include the following:

- Reduce the unnecessary use of Social Security numbers by federal agencies, the most

valuable commodity for an identity thief;

- Establish national standards that require private sector entities to safeguard the personal data they compile and maintain and to provide notice to consumers when a breach occurs that poses a significant risk of identity theft;
- Implement a broad, sustained awareness campaign by federal agencies to educate consumers, the private sector and the public sector on methods to deter, detect and defend against identity theft; and
- Create a National Identity Theft Law Enforcement Center to allow law enforcement agencies to coordinate their efforts and information more efficiently, and investigate and prosecute identity thieves more effectively.

The Task Force's recommendations also include several legislative proposals designed to fill the gaps in current laws criminalizing the acts of many identity thieves, and ensure that victims can recover the value of the time lost attempting to repair damage inflicted by identity theft. These proposals include the following actions:

- Amending the identity theft and aggravated identity theft statutes to ensure that identity thieves who misappropriate information belonging to corporations and organizations can be prosecuted;
- Adding new crimes to the list of offenses which, if committed by identity thieves in connection with the identity theft itself, will subject those criminals to a two-year mandatory sentence available under the “aggravated identity theft” statute;
- Broadening the statute that criminalizes the theft of electronic data by eliminating the current requirement that the information must have been stolen through interstate communications;
- Amending existing statutes to assure the ability of federal prosecutors to charge those who use malicious spyware and keyloggers; and
- Amending the cyber-extortion statute to cover additional, alternate types of cyber-extortion.

The plan was released at an authentication workshop which resulted from an earlier recommendation of the Task Force. In addition to the release of the Task Force’s Strategic Plan, a Web site was launched today, <http://www.idtheft.gov>, which contains the full Strategic Plan, and will eventually serve as clearinghouse for educational resources for consumers, businesses, and law enforcement on ways to prevent and detect identity theft, and help victims recover.

The Identity Theft Task Force, co-chaired by the Attorney General and the FTC Chairman, was established by Executive Order of the President on May 10, 2006, and is now

comprised of 17 federal agencies and departments. The Task Force will continue its work over the coming months, and play a central role in the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

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