

Cell Phone Pirates: House Panel Advances Measure to Safeguard Your Call Records

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**'The Scoop'**

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A House committee today advanced a measure by Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) to keep cell phone records secret, following up on a Sun-Times expose.

My colleague crime reporter Frank Main provided this update on efforts in Washington and Springfield to safeguard your cell phone records.

This report from Frank Main:

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Chicago) announced Wednesday that her SAFE CALL bill was included in bipartisan legislation passed by the House Energy and Commerce Committee to protect the private phone records of consumers. Schakowsky introduced the bill on Jan. 31, a few weeks after the Chicago

Sun-Times reported that Chicago Police and the FBI were warning their undercover agents that criminals could buy their cell phone records on the Internet.

Sen. Richard Durbin (D-Ill.) has introduced a similar measure. The Sun-Times has reported that some information brokers have been calling records from cell phone companies by posing as customers, hacking into their databases and buying the information from insiders.

As a result, attorneys general across the country, including Illinois' Lisa Madigan, have filed lawsuits and subpoenaed records to stop the practice.

Not only could law enforcement agencies be compromised by these phone record burglars: abusive spouses could buy such records to track down their victims. Such phone records are commonly used by lawyers in divorce proceedings.

In her statement released today, Schakowsky said: "I am proud that my bill, the SAFE CALL Act, has become part of the bipartisan effort to combat one of the newest threats to consumers' privacy and safety - the fraudulent acquisition of phone records, or pretexting, in order to sell those records to anyone who wants them."