



Media Release

Monroe County Democratic Caucus

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For Immediate Release
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Democrats Call for Clerk to Protect Personal Privacy

"Social Security Numbers Must Be Removed from Website"

Rochester, New York – August 7, 2008. After media reports revealed that thousands of individuals' social security numbers appear on the Monroe County Clerk's website, Democrats in the County Legislature are calling for the information to be immediately removed or for portions of the website be blocked by the County until it can be removed.

Given the urgent need for action to protect citizens from potential identity thieves, Democrats have introduced Legislation that, if passed, would implement their demands.

The documents containing the social security numbers that were discovered yesterday were primarily bankruptcy related, which compounds the potential for damage from identity theft. While the Clerk is prohibited from redacting the physical documents after their filing, posting them on her website is optional. The Clerk is not required to post any documents to her website. The documents with social security numbers were filed with the Clerk's office from the early 1990's through at least 2007.

Assistant Democratic Leader Calvin Lee (D-Rochester) said, "Every citizen's social security number must be protected. It's hard to believe that Ms. Dinolfo has refused to shut down her website until these documents are removed. It is a risky decision that is making an untold number of Monroe County residents vulnerable to financial criminals. She's had more than 24 hours to take action and she has failed: that is simply unacceptable."

The legislation was introduced by Legislator Ted O'Brien (D-Irondequoit) who said, "It is imperative that all social security numbers be removed from the County Clerk's website immediately and that steps be taken to ensure that Monroe County residents are not put at risk like this again."

To support their call for a temporary shut down of the site while these documents are removed or redacted, Democrats pointed to a similar situation that arose in Suffolk County in 2006. After the Suffolk County Clerk was notified that several thousand social security numbers were visible, the County Clerk's website was promptly shut down.

According to the industry experts, there are several commercially available software programs capable of redacting 100,000 documents each day, which means the Clerk's website, with 15 million documents, would take only two weeks to fully scan.

(more)

In 2007, Democrats sent a letter to Clerk Dinolfo regarding a constituent complaining that a social security number was posted on her website. Despite this warning, Dinolfo failed to initiate any comprehensive review to seek out and remove other sensitive information from her website. This letter is attached.

Please find the legislation attached. Also, individuals concerned about protecting their privacy are encouraged to read the following website containing a wealth of useful information: (<http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/10064.html#confidential>)

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