

**Statement Congresswoman Sue Kelly
Subcommittee on Financial Institutions and Consumer Credit
Hearing: “Fighting Identity Theft – The Role of FCRA”
June 24, 2003**

Thank you, Chairman Bachus, for holding this important hearing on the role of the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) in preventing identity theft.

Earlier this year, I chaired a joint hearing with Chairman Bachus on fighting identity fraud and improving information security. In that hearing, we learned that identity theft is among the fastest growing crimes in America, and it is top consumer complaint according to the Federal Trade Commission. Most importantly, we discovered that combating identity theft requires the collaborative effort of law enforcement and regulatory agencies, consumers and financial institutions – all with access to appropriate information.

As this Committee continues to explore the reauthorization of FCRA, I would like to stress the impact that this law has had on our ability to combat identity theft and help law enforcement officials track down illicit money under the PATRIOT Act. FCRA, and the information-sharing it has provided, is essential to protecting the American people by detecting suspicious activity and weeding out wrongdoers. The national uniform standards under FCRA have also facilitated a financial institution’s ability to utilize additional authentications and identity verifications to protect consumer security. In addition, the protections incorporated in FCRA are critically important in enabling victims to correct the damage to their credit histories created by identity thieves.

Over the last few weeks, we have heard testimony from a diverse panel of witnesses endorsing the extension of FCRA’s uniform standards. The Department of the Treasury specifically highlighted the importance of the national credit reporting system in helping to detect identity theft and in creating a framework for assisting its victims. I share these views and believe that we must reauthorize FCRA to protect Americans from these hideous and preventable crimes.

I thank the witnesses for appearing before the Committee. I look forward to working with you on strengthening our network to combat identity theft.