

Steps Toward Privacy Protection

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In April, the Subcommittee on Government Management, Information and Technology of the House Government Reform Committee held a hearing to review the merits of establishing the Commission for the Comprehensive Study of Privacy Protection. The focus of the hearing was the Hutchinson/Moran Privacy Commission Act, HR 4049.

The act aims to establish a 17-member bipartisan Privacy Protection Commission to review all issues pertaining to the protection of an individual's personal privacy. Specifically, the commission would be directed to:

1. study the current laws relating to the protection of individual privacy and existing efforts being undertaken to address the issue
2. conduct hearings around the country to receive comments from the public, business leaders, and the community
3. identify potential threats posed to individual privacy in the "cyber age" and submit a report to Congress on its findings, including any legislative recommendations for the reform or augmentation of current laws and regulations

Within 18 months, the commission would be expected to complete four field hearings in each of the five geographical regions of the US and then submit a report to Congress.

AHIMA met with Congressman Hutchinson's (R-AR) staff to discuss this legislation and to impress upon them the need for the commission to review the health information privacy issue. Further, AHIMA received assurances that the activities of the commission would be complementary to legislative or regulatory action that is occurring or may develop. We will continue to be closely involved with the progress of this legislation. For a copy of HR 4049, click on Issues and Legislation at www.ahima.org/dc/index.html.

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