

I am opposed to Congressman Johnson's proposed "Keeping IDs safe act of 2011" (H.R. 3475).

I am a retired city planner and former high school and community college teacher. Now, I am an amateur genealogist, who has been working on my family tree for the past 15 years.

I use the free access to the Social Security Death Index fairly often to validate a family relationship, to get a year and month of death, or to get a hint as to the last place the relative might have lived so that I can look for more information at that location. Typically, I do not need to send for a copy of the application, and I rarely need to use an actual social security number to narrow down a family member. But, I should have a right to see it for purposes of record keeping.

The proposed act will NOT keep IDs safe. It will merely restrict public information and make it much more difficult for researchers, whether private or academic, to gather information that should be publicly available.

Social security numbers are available all over --especially those of the folks dying now . These numbers come from old work or school records, old credit and mortgage applications, old medical records, old military or passport applications, as well as numerous other sources currently in the public records that might have included the numbers as a tracking mechanism.

Even if the numbers were further restricted, the proposed law would fail to protect ID as intended. The law would just makes it much more difficult and costly for an average person to obtain information about a family member or historical figure that he or she has a right to see. What is happening to the freedom of information rights that we used to have?

I see the proposed law as just another attempt at censorship in a free society.

The numbers are easily obtained by internet hackers, mail thieves and even dumpster divers. If there is a will to do harm, such as stealing identities, the creative criminal will figure out a way to do it. Once you start restricting information ( other than that what is clearly for national security purposes) where do you stop?

Please kill this bill that would further restrict our rights to information in a free society.