

CAROLYN B. MALONEY
14TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

2331 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3214
(202) 225-7944

COMMITTEES:
FINANCIAL SERVICES

GOVERNMENT REFORM

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-3214

October 31, 2007

DISTRICT OFFICES:

1651 THIRD AVENUE
SUITE 311
NEW YORK, NY 10128
(212) 860-0606

28-11 ASTORIA BOULEVARD
ASTORIA, NY 11102
(718) 932-1804

WEBSITE: www.house.gov/maloney

Richard F. Smith
Chairman and CEO
Equifax
1550 Peachtree St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30309

Dear Mr. Smith:

I applaud your recent decision to make the security freeze available to all consumers regardless of whether they reside in states that have enacted legislation providing the security freeze. As of tomorrow, consumers throughout the country will be able to freeze access to their credit files at all three credit bureaus, giving them a powerful new tool to protect themselves from the most costly and difficult-to-resolve form of ID theft—new account fraud. The freeze is the only tool available that actually helps prevent new account fraud; many other available services merely allow the consumer to detect the fraud after it has already occurred.

While your decision is a strong step forward for consumers, I urge you to enhance the feasibility of the freeze by making it easier-to-use and more affordable for consumers. In addition, it is essential that consumers be able to locate easily information about the freeze on your web site. High costs, cumbersome procedures, and obscured information erect unnecessary barriers to consumers who are eager to freeze their files.

First, I urge you to consider reducing the costs of placing, temporarily lifting and removing the freeze. At \$10 per consumer per credit bureau, a two-earner family that places the freeze and lifts it just twice in a given year to access joint credit would pay \$180, putting the freeze out of reach for many households. Eliminating the costs of temporarily lifting or removing the freeze would encourage more consumers to place the freeze.

Second, I urge you to consider eliminating the administrative hurdles to placing and lifting the freeze. Placement by certified mail creates a barrier to consumers' use of the freeze by requiring them to not only make a trip to the post office but also to incur additional expense without any added security benefit. Providing multiple methods of placement, including regular mail, phone or a secure electronic method would make it easier for consumers to place the freeze, reducing barriers to its use. In addition, allowing consumers to lift the freeze within 15 minutes of an electronic or phone request would reduce consumer concerns that they will be unable to quickly access credit if they place a freeze, encouraging more consumers to use this powerful new ID theft prevention tool. Finally, I encourage you to work with the other credit bureaus to provide one-stop-shopping for placement of the freeze so that consumers need not make three separate requests in order to place and lift the freeze.

Third, I encourage you to make it easier for consumers to find clear and concise information about the freeze on your website. Prominently displaying on your homepage a link to

information about the security freeze and how to use it would give consumers access to freeze information without first having to navigate through the different pages of Equifax's website.

While Equifax currently provides information about the freeze on its site, it is difficult for consumers to locate. In addition, if, in the future, Equifax includes the freeze as part of a larger bundle of credit monitoring or other services in the future, I urge you to ensure that marketing information prominently discloses that the freeze is also available as a standalone product.

Again, I applaud your efforts to make the security freeze available to consumers throughout the country. It is an excellent first step in giving consumers a powerful new identity theft prevention tool. I look forward to working with you to make the security freeze more affordable and accessible for consumers.

Sincerely,


CAROLYN B. MALONEY
Member of Congress