

**Testimony of James D. Earl
Executive Director
Advisory Board for the Nevada Task Force
for Technological Crime**

**Legislative Committee on Health Care Subcommittee
to Study Services for the Treatment and
Prevention of Substance Abuse**

Carson City, NV
April 25, 2006

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be with you today.

Someone seeing my name and title on the agenda for this meeting might wonder, “What does substance abuse have to do with technological crime?” That is a fair question. I would like to answer right up front.

First, the 1999 Nevada statute that brought my joint executive-legislative Board into existence also defined the term “technological crime” in such a way that any substance abuse crime, possession or distribution, that “directly or indirectly” uses a computer, cell phone, PDA, or other electronic device in its commission, is not only a drug crime, but a technological crime as well.

Secondly, as recent news articles indicate, there appears to be a significant anecdotal relationship between methamphetamine use and identity theft. Simply put, it appears that a number of methamphetamine users are turning to identity theft in order to fund future purchases of the drug.

I defer to law enforcement personnel and others to tell you more about their experiences in the field. However, it is sufficient from my standpoint to know that there is pending federal legislation now before the Senate Judiciary Committee to fund a national study to examine the relationship. Let’s consider some statistics derived from two different

sources, the Internet Crime Complaint Center (or IC3) and the U.S. Department of Health.

As the attached press release explains, when adjusted for population, Nevada leads the nation with the highest per capita rate of perpetrators of Internet fraud.

Now let's turn to some statistics regarding methamphetamine use. The U.S. Department of Health, in its 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, reports that 2.2% of Nevadans age 12 and older had used methamphetamine in the past year. Meth usage by population, at 2.2%, makes Nevada's usage the highest in the country.

We have the highest per capita rate of perpetrators of Internet fraud AND the highest methamphetamine use in the country. Coincidence? Maybe. We will not know until a causality study is done. But it is a striking coincidence none the less.

My concern is that here in Nevada, we may be overlooking evidence that links methamphetamine use and production to identity theft. In so doing, we may inadvertently be allowing the monetary losses and personal trauma associated with identity theft to increase beyond what they should be.

Before I explain my concern, let me quickly review what my organization does.

The statutory duties of my Board include:

- Facilitating cooperation among state, local and federal officers in the detection, investigation and prosecution of technological crimes.
- Establishment and oversight of two multi-agency task forces, one based in Reno and one based in Las Vegas.
- Coordination and provision of training and education to prevent and detect technological crimes.

- Recommendation of changes to Nevada laws to respond to technological change and law enforcement requirements.

The task forces envisioned by the statute have been formed and are operational. Since there has been no State funding, the task forces operate two electronic forensic labs using equipment and personnel donated by the participating law enforcement agencies.

Presently, task force members include the FBI, ICE, Secret Service, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Reno Police Department, Washoe Sheriff's Office, and the Clark County School District.

The task force members, either within the task force structure, or within the scope of arrangements made individually with other law enforcement agencies, perform forensic analysis on all electronic devices in Nevada suspected of involvement in criminal activity. So, for example, a computer seized in Henderson or Sparks that is suspected of containing evidence relating to a murder, financial fraud, drug distribution, or child pornography will be examined by either one of the task forces, or by task force members acting in their separate capacities.

Returning to the relationship between methamphetamine and identity theft, I see at least two major problems.

First, many first responders fail to recognize electronic evidence and leave it behind. So, during the seizure of a meth lab, a law enforcement team would naturally focus on the personal safety of people in the vicinity, the final product, precursor chemicals and equipment, and the suspects then on site. The team might well overlook the CD sitting on a shelf that contains an electronic spreadsheet detailing distribution channels or sources of supply and related purchases.

During the search of a suspected user, the cop on the beat is going to be looking for the drug itself and might overlook the thumb drive – often smaller than a pack of gum – that might contain records of hundreds of individuals – their personal and financial information – as well as electronic evidence of how that personal information was used in an identity theft operation to obtain money to sustain drug purchases.

By not recognizing, seizing, and safeguarding electronic evidence, first responders may not only be missing evidence useful at trial, they may be leaving information behind that will enable the perpetrator, or a colleague, to continue to use that information – possibly to the detriment of many victims of continued identity theft or other financial fraud.

We are addressing this aspect of the problem.

We are exploring how best to deliver appropriate training to law enforcement first responders both on and off site.

We have done two distributions of training CDs to all law enforcement agencies in Nevada. As an example, two of the first group of six CDs are entitled *Meth equals Death* and *Effects of Methamphetamine, Identity Theft and Domestic Violence*. These were prepared by the Rural Law Enforcement Technology Center. Two of the CDs in our second distribution are *Cyber Crime Fighting II – Digital Evidence Search, Seizure and Preservation* and *Introduction to Internet Investigations*. These were produced by the National White Collar Crime Center in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Justice.

(We also included the CD *Tips for Kids, Safe Surfing – Using the Internet Safely*, a separate CD containing a parents version, and Presenter Notes. We had learned, through a state-wide questionnaire sent to law enforcement agencies, that many police and sheriffs departments wanted training materials to support their liaison activities with local schools.)

Now, let me return to the second major problem we face in addressing the relationship between methamphetamine and identity theft.

We have a supply and demand problem when it comes to forensic examination of suspect electronic devices.

As police and sheriff's departments recognize the evidentiary importance of computers and cell phones, they will seize more and more of them as part of the investigative process of drug crimes, internet identity theft crimes, and, essentially, many other crimes.

The demand for forensic examinations goes up.

However, the supply of those forensic examinations is going down.

The State of Nevada has not provided significant funding to its technological crime task forces since their formation. Instead, we have relied on others – mainly the federal agencies – to provide the personnel and equipment to conduct forensic examination of suspect electronic devices seized in Nevada.

However, the federal agencies are now directed to concentrate on investigations likely to have a homeland security component such as illegal cyber money service businesses, computer intrusions, and intellectual property rights. As a result, fewer federal resources are available to support Nevada law enforcement agencies in local criminal investigations that involve electronic data and service.

So, here is where we are:

We know there is at least an anecdotal correlation between methamphetamine and Internet computer crimes including identity theft.

We know that both drug crimes and identity theft increasingly involve computers and cell phones directly or indirectly.

We know that first responders, quite appropriately, will seize more and more electronic devices because they contain evidence not only of the immediate crime, but of related – and potentially continuing – criminal activities.

We know that Nevada has relied on the federal agencies to process this evidence for years.

We know that federal forensic assets will become less available to local and state Nevada law enforcement officials.

So, essentially, we know that, in future, we will be less able to protect the citizens of Nevada unless sufficient investment is made to deal with the forensic electronic evidence of this century.

We will be less able to break the link between methamphetamine and continuing computer-related crimes including identity theft.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

NDOJ



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
DATE: Tuesday April 18, 2006

Technology Crime Board Considers Response to Nevada Leading Nation as Home to Most Perpetrators of Internet Fraud

Reno, NV – Nevada Attorney General George Chanos is asking the Advisory Board for the Nevada Task Force on Technological Crime to respond to a new report from the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3). The report shows Nevada leads the nation with the highest per capita rate of perpetrators of Internet fraud. This is not the first year Nevada has occupied the unenviable position on the IC3 Internet Crime Report.

“Internet fraud” is an umbrella term that includes a large number of things,” said Jim Earl, Executive Director of the Advisory Board, “The categories considered by IC3 include Internet auction fraud, non-delivery of goods ordered over the Internet, credit/debit card fraud with an Internet component, Internet investment fraud, and Internet identity theft.”

According to the report, auction fraud accounted for 62.7% of the complaints reported to IC3. Non-delivery of merchandise was the second largest complaint category representing 15.7%. The IC3 2005 annual report can be obtained through the IC3 web site at www.ic3.gov/media.

The Board will take the report into consideration as it evaluates a working paper which reviews progress on the six missions created for the Board by a Nevada statute passed in 1999.

The recommendations contained in the working paper were based in part on the results of a survey sent to some 35 State and local law enforcement agencies. The responses unanimously reflected the belief by Nevada law enforcement agencies that the need to examine suspect electronic devices (such as computers and cell phones) will continue to increase in the future. All agreed that additional training of first responders is needed to recognize, seize, and safeguard suspect electronic devices (computers, CDs, floppy disks, thumb drives, cell phones, and PDAs) when making arrests, preparing search warrants, and conducting investigations for all crimes.

Other recommendations included a significant increase in State funding for additional forensic investigators, and training materials for first responders. The training materials would include information assisting local law enforcement agencies to liaise with school officials to address student Internet safety issues. Discussion during the meeting emphasized that Nevada must be prepared for

the increased demand for forensic services that will come about as a result of the training of Nevada law enforcement first responders.

However, lack of funding for the board to accomplish these goals may create a problem. The funding for the Board and its task forces is slightly more than \$5,000 for the fiscal year beginning this July.

“As initially conceived, the Board and its task forces would be funded by grants,” Earl said. “However, grant funding has not materialized, in part because of the national shift in funding priorities toward specialized homeland security projects in the aftermath of 9-11. Additionally, federal agencies are now directed to concentrate on investigations likely to have a homeland security component such as illegal cyber money service businesses, computer intrusions, and intellectual property rights. As a consequence, fewer federal resources are available to support Nevada law enforcement agencies in local criminal investigations that involve electronic data and devices.”

The Board is expected to review budget and program issues at its next meeting on July 10, 2006. The Board will likely consider possible enlargement due, in part, to growing awareness that strong enforcement efforts to investigate and suppress technological crime result in significant economic advantages to businesses located in Nevada.

Attorney General Chanos serves as the chairperson for the Advisory Board for the Nevada Task Force on Technological Crime. The Board oversees two task forces, one located in Reno and one in Las Vegas, comprised of investigators specifically trained to investigate technological crime. Current participating agencies include the FBI, ICE, Secret Service, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Reno Police Department, Washoe Sheriff’s Office, and the Clark County School District.

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Do Meth Addicts Want Your Identity?

Police See Link; Senators Want Federal Investigation

By DEAN SCHABNER

June 2, 2005 -- - If you think you're safe from identity theft because you shred documents before disposing of them, Pierce County, Wash., prosecutors have some people you should meet.

They're methamphetamine addicts, and in Pierce County, as in many other areas across the West, law enforcement officials are finding more and more evidence of what they believe is a link between meth use and identity theft.

"The thing that is somewhat unique to identity theft is that it requires an almost absurd amount of hours and focus, which methamphetamine users have in abundance," said Mark Lindquist, team chief of the drug unit with the county prosecuting attorney. "We've seen methamphetamine users putting together papers that have been through shredders."

The link has been found in as much as 90 percent of the identity theft cases being prosecuted in the county, he said.

More than a year ago, ABCNEWS.com spoke with numerous local law enforcement officials who were already seeing the link, but so far there is only anecdotal evidence. Federal lawmakers are now calling for a study to determine the extent of the problem.

A Wave of Identity Theft

Earlier this spring, Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., asked the U.S. Department of Justice to conduct a comprehensive national investigation of the connection between the two crimes.

"Having nationwide information and a better understanding of the growing problem will help lay the groundwork for a comprehensive solution," Cantwell said at a news conference in Seattle. "If we're going to be successful in curbing these crimes and keeping communities safe, we need a strategy to attack them at their roots."

Recently, Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., signed on to Cantwell's bill.

Over the past decade, there has been a dramatic increase in meth use. More than 9,300 meth labs were seized across the country in 2004, a 500 percent increase since 1996. That boom has coincided with a sharp rise in the incidence of identity theft. There were 214,905 reports received by the Federal Trade Commission in 2003, up from 86,212 in 2001.

In many cases, it seems, the two crimes go hand in hand.

Funding Addiction

For example, in Colorado, 16 people have been indicted on charges, including racketeering, computer crime and motor vehicle theft, following a seven-month investigation into alleged identity theft that prosecutors say was fueled by the suspects' hunger for methamphetamines.

The indictment, handed up by a Denver grand jury, accuses a core group of five people of stealing money, merchandise, checkbooks, credit cards, guns, cars and other items. Eleven other people are also believed to be involved.

The proceeds from the crimes were used to buy methamphetamine, according to the Denver District Attorney's Office.

"The amount of crime fueled by illegal drug use, especially meth right now, has a huge impact on everyone in the metro area," District Attorney Mitch Morrissey said. "We all benefit when a criminal enterprise like this is shut down."

The indictment alleges that Kasey Blake Gruver, 30; Jennifer Wilson, 24; Mark Hazlett, 39; Daniel Campbell, 27; and Guadalupe "Jay" Garcia, 26; were a "clearinghouse" for stolen merchandise and stolen personal and financial information.

That is the way identity theft fits into the criminal world created by meth, police say. Meth addicts will steal mail, "Dumpster dive," or even burglarize homes or businesses to gather documents that can be used to steal identities. They will then either use them to commit identity fraud themselves to raise money to support their habits, or trade the information to others for meth.

Doubts About a Link

Despite the certainty expressed by police and prosecutors, officials at the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the crime-fighting arm of the U.S. Postal Service, say the kind of crime associated with meth addicts has a small impact overall on identity theft.

An FTC study released earlier this year found only 4 percent of identity theft linked to mail theft, said Paul Krenn, a spokesman with the USPIS, though he noted that there is a higher incidence of mail theft in regions where meth use is high.

What has driven the boom in identity theft, he said, is the large-scale thefts of the personal data of hundreds of thousands of people from companies such as Lexis-Nexis, Bank of America, Commerce Bank, PNC Bank and Wachovia Bank.

But he did agree that the issue should be studied further.

Getting the Resources

For law enforcement officials, a potential federal study is seen as a boon, but not because they expect it will tell them anything new about meth use and identity theft.

Laura Birkmeyer, executive assistant U.S. attorney in San Diego, said the information could help in many ways, such as providing an impetus for investigators to coordinate better and to help design programs to prevent convicts from reoffending.

Lindquist said a federal study will also help police get the funding they need for their fight.

"We already know they go together, but what will help us is when it comes to getting resources committed to the problem," Lindquist said.

Anything that will help police put an end to the scourge of meth abuse is welcome, he said, because the drug has a negative impact on communities in so many ways.

Because of the toxic mix of chemicals used in meth labs, locations where they have been operated often have to be treated like toxic waste sites. One farm in Pierce County will be unusable for at least 10 years because a meth lab was run there, Lindquist said.

And law enforcement and health officials have recently pointed to another disturbing trend -- the damage done to children living near meth labs.

"Mom gets addicted to meth and she brings in the dirtbag cook and he poisons the child by producing meth in the home," Lindquist said. "The thing about meth is, it is such a scourge I don't know anyone who has any knowledge about it who doesn't think it is the worst drug they've ever seen."

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The meth connection to identity theft

Drug addiction plays a part in many crime rings, cops say

By Bob Sullivan

Technology correspondent

MSNBC

Updated: 3:57 p.m. ET March 10, 2004

Police in the small Olympic Peninsula town of Port Orchard, Wash., sensed something was wrong when they approached the pickup truck sitting in the town's RV park. To begin with, its occupants were naked. Inside the truck, an even more bizarre scene: Piles and piles of mail.

The truck's occupants quickly confessed: The mail was stolen, lifted from mailboxes in the hopes of trading it for hits of methamphetamine at a nearby mobile home. There, police found a scene increasingly familiar to drug detectives around the country: The occupants, who were high, were surrounded by a pile of stolen televisions and stereos, a mountain of stolen mail and a small methamphetamine production lab.

"They were drugged out of their minds," Detective Jerry Jensen says. "They lived like pigs. It was a house full of stolen stuff and it's all about meth."

It is a twin-headed monster ravaging communities across the nation: methamphetamine addiction and identity theft. By all accounts, [methamphetamine use is skyrocketing](#), leaving thousands of broken homes in its wake. Meanwhile, police officers around the country say nearly every time they bust an ID theft ring, the criminals are meth addicts.

The drugs and the crime fit neatly together; addicts strung out on meth can stay awake and focused for days at a time, making them expert hackers and mailbox thieves. And ID theft is easy money, the perfect income for drug addicts who have no other way to fund their habit.

Last year, police busted 9,300 meth labs, and the Federal Trade Commission says 10 million consumers were hit with ID theft. It's not clear which came first, the addiction, or the criminal explosion, but increasingly, authorities believe the struggle against meth use and fight against ID theft are largely the same battle.

The drug that binds

Detective Jim Dunn of the Thurston County Sheriff's office in Washington says he now gets at least two new identity theft cases every day; on a busy day, eight or nine. At any given time, he's investigating about 60 active cases, and in about 95 percent of them, meth addiction plays a role.

"ID theft is so easy to do," Dunn says. "They can steal mail. They have the time, meth keeps them up so long. They have the time to sit and make counterfeit checks, fake driver's licenses."

ID theft ring bosses use meth addiction to keep their runners in line, and to get new recruits, says Eugene, Ore., police detective Steve Williams.

Take the case of Steven Massey, convicted for his role as ringleader of an ID theft gang in 2000. Methamphetamine was the glue that kept Massey's ring together, Williams says.

Massey knew where to find meth addicts, and he made them a simple proposal: I'll trade mail for meth. Soon a small army of meth addicts was prowling neighborhoods near Eugene, stealing mail out of hundreds of mailboxes, and raiding the local recycling center for pre-approved credit card applications. Others in the ring broke into cars to steal purses and wallets -- not for the money, but for the ID papers.

By the time Massey was arrested, investigators say he had gained access to over 400 credit card accounts and netted closed to \$400,000. Massey eventually pleaded guilt to conspiracy to commit computer fraud and to mail theft.

It's a typical case, Williams says.

"Ninety percent of our ID theft cases deal with drugs," he said. And it's usually methamphetamine, which is easy and cheap to produce in mass quantities.

"You don't see a lot of meth users robbing banks," Williams says. "You see someone on heroin do that. Meth users are less likely to get themselves shot. Plus, they can make more money in a fraud crime than they can sticking a gun in someone's face. If you bring a gun in a bank, you can face life in prison. Or you can write a series of bad checks and score 10 times that amount and get parole."

Massey was in fact released on parole last year, but he's already back in police custody -- arrested in Phoenix for allegedly trying to pass a fraudulent check.

Why meth and ID theft go together

Meth is the perfect companion for identity theft because of the nature of the high it gives users, says Mike Gorman, a professor at San Jose State University's College of Social Work.

A meth user can stay awake for several days at a time, and is often content to perform repetitive tasks -- even having the patience to stitch together shredded documents.

Meth "is energizing. It keeps you alert and focused," Gorman says. Unlike heroin, which generally induces sleep, or crack cocaine, which can lead to impetuous violence, meth is far better-suited to the tasks of identity thieves, he says.

"It's unique psychopharmacological properties would assist identity theft. The whole detail-oriented aspect of it, the obsessive-compulsive aspect of it."

Tara, a convicted meth user and identity thief arrested by Detective Mike Hewitt in Vancouver, Wash., explains the phenomenon in a training video she made for police after her arrest. She agreed to make the video in exchange for a lighter prison sentence and Hewitt in turn agreed to keep her last name private.

In the video, Tara tells Hewitt that when she switched from heroin to meth, her criminal habits changed as well.

"Heroin addicts have a hand-to-mouth existence. If you have a \$500-a-day habit, you have to steal \$3,000 worth of stuff to support it. It's a desperation thing," Hewitt says. "Heroin is related to a lot of shoplifting."

"When I did heroin, I shoplifted," Tara says. "I never had time to be up 24/7."

Then she took up meth, and "with that kind of time" on her hands, she switched to identity theft, which easily fed her habit.

With their dramatic ups and downs — a meth user can stay awake for days at a time, but then must sleep it off for days at a time — meth addicts can have a harder time holding down part-time jobs than addicts of other drugs. That makes learning how to fund their addiction through identity theft all the more attractive, says John Tennis, public information officer for the Thurston County Sheriff's office.

A lot of this learning takes place at organized meth parties. Loosely-knit groups of meth users gather regularly to swap recipes for making meth, and for turning stolen data into cash, Hewitt says.

"It's like they go to school with older users. There are parties where they are told to bring their laptops, that are 'classes' in ID theft," Hewitt said. "It's kind of like a multi-level marketing thing: 'I'll teach you if I benefit from what you do.'"

Meth is so easy to get, and initially, so inexpensive, that it's an easy habit to acquire, says Susan Webber-Brown, a district attorney in Butte, Calif., who regularly gives seminars on meth addiction.

"You can start for \$20 to 40 a day, using it once in the morning, once in the afternoon," she said. "But after using it a while, you need more to get the same effect, perhaps \$125 to \$250 a day." At seven days a week, the cost of addiction stacks up quickly, leaving crime as the only alternative for funding the habit.

Identity theft quickly becomes the obvious answer for meth addicts — even convicted addicts currently serving time, says Detective Joe DeJournette of Yakima, Wash.

"Identity theft can be committed even by people under home detention from the comfort of their own homes," he says. He calls it "drive-through" crime.

"I have a case where a suspect brought a credit card to a trailer home to a girl who activated the card on a computer in her trailer ... while she was wearing her home detention anklet."

National attention, but not much help

The connection between meth and ID theft have received nationwide attention. During congressional hearings on the Fair Credit Reporting Act last summer, Evan Hendricks of The Privacy Times told the Senate Banking Committee about Phoenix-area meth and ID theft rings called "Tweakers."

"They have their own terminology. They don't work, they live in hotel rooms and stolen vehicles; they keep late hours. They love to gamble," Hendricks told the committee, quoting Phoenix area U.S. Postal Inspector Robert Maes. "Someone will know someone who will trade drugs for Social Security numbers."

But the crime continues to overwhelm local police forces; many are crying out for more federal assistance. Hewitt says his fraud caseload has climbed 300 percent each year since he began working ID theft cases five years ago.


Meanwhile, as the police work gets harder, the work of identity thieves gets easier, DeJournette says. Criminals can now buy software at office supply stores for a few dollars that prints out official-looking checks with any stolen account number on them. Even special banking magnetic ink, once used to determine the authenticity of a check, is now being sold in inkjet printer cartridges by office supply stores.

"What is the federal government doing?" DeJournette asks. "What will help the little towns across the country with our one fraud detective, to fight these crimes? "

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News

Press Release of Senator Cantwell

Cantwell Measure to Investigate Link Between ID Theft and Meth Approved by Senate Committee

Local Law Enforcement Officials Alarmed by Trend: One Crime Funds the Other

Friday, July 29, 2005

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Senate Commerce committee has approved U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell's (D-WA) proposal calling for a comprehensive, national investigation of the link between identity theft and methamphetamine crimes. The provision was included in a larger bill to fight identity theft.

"I've heard time and time again from local law enforcement officials that meth addicts engage in widespread identity theft," said Cantwell, a member of the Senate Commerce Committee, which approved her measure. "These crimefighters need more federal resources to help them combat this compound crime. By investigating the link between ID theft and meth, we can develop a comprehensive solution that attacks the crimes at their roots, and breaks the cycle."

During a meeting on Thursday, the Commerce Committee approved the Identity Theft Protection Act (S. 1408), which included language incorporating Cantwell's proposal. The bill addresses the recent data breaches of sensitive personal information and the current lack of tools for consumers to protect themselves from identity theft.

In March, Cantwell learned first-hand from law enforcement officials in Spokane, Vancouver, and Seattle about the combined dangers of meth crime and identity theft. Cantwell introduced the Methamphetamine and Identity Theft Study Act of 2005 (S. 844).

No national data currently exists to document the emerging meth/ID theft connection, and there is no comprehensive strategy to deal with these dual crimes. Cantwell's provision directs the Department of Justice to conduct a national investigation of the issue, including a statistical analysis of the correlation between meth and identity theft crimes.

Cantwell believes a national investigation of the connection between ID theft and meth would serve a number of important purposes, including:

- Focus attention on these related federal crimes, helping build the case for more resources to fight them; and
- Help move the burden for assessing trends in federal crimes off local law enforcement – particularly since meth and ID theft crimes are often perpetrated across state lines and prey on federal services and programs such as the U.S. mail and Social Security identification.

According to the Spokane County Sheriff, 100 percent of the area's 2004 identity theft crimes had ties to meth. Pierce County officials report that between 80 to 90 percent of the county's identity theft defendants either have a pending or prior meth charge.

Cantwell has been a leader in the Senate to both protect consumers from identity theft and combat methamphetamine abuse. In March, a Cantwell-cosponsored amendment added to the Senate's Fiscal Year 2006 Budget Resolution restored \$160 million in federal funds to help local law enforcement clean up meth labs. The budget amendment is consistent with legislation Cantwell introduced in February, the "Arrest Methamphetamine Act of 2005," which would authorize \$800 million in federal funds over 5 years to combat the meth problem.

Also in March, Cantwell added a provision to bankruptcy reform legislation that will prevent identity thieves from trolling court filings for personal information such as Social Security numbers. In December 2003, President Bush signed into law Cantwell's legislation to speed up law

enforcement investigations of ID theft, as part of the Fair Credit Reporting Act. By giving victims and those they "deputize" in law enforcement easier access to important records, the law – which just took effect last June – also enhances the ability of authorities to solve cases of identity theft across state lines.

In 2004, Washington state ranked eighth in the nation for identity theft crimes – up from tenth the year before. The number of victims in Washington state climbed about 20 percent in just one year. Meanwhile, meth accounted for almost half of all the drug seizures in Washington state.