



Dear Friend:

Have you noticed at times your computer runs slower than usual? Have you ever visited a web site and found yourself incapable of closing all the pop-up advertisements?

If so, you probably join me and millions of other Americans who have fallen victim to a growing threat on the Internet: *spyware*. While these scenarios are certainly annoying and disruptive, more appalling is that businesses and individuals are exploiting your computer to gather your personal information for their financial gain.

As you know, I've worked for several years to protect individuals from having their identity stolen. As technology changes, we must adapt policies to reflect changing threats posed by the Internet. Spyware is deceptive software that a web site installs on your computer without your consent to harvest your personal information or redirect your computer to inappropriate or unintended sites.

Spyware jeopardizes the security of personal information and private transactions. It threatens commerce on the Internet and shakes consumers' confidence of Web purchases. A form of spyware, commonly known as adware, tracks Web surfing and online shopping activity so marketers can send unsolicited ads. It can pollute computers to the point that their performance is significantly diminished.

As a member of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection and cosponsor of the Securely Protect Yourself Against Cyber Trespass Act (Spy Act), I've been fighting to require individuals or companies that deploy spyware to provide notice to consumers and obtain their consent before spyware can be loaded onto computers. The Spy Act will also bar activities such as tracking computer keystrokes and displaying advertisements that cannot be closed.

Similar legislation was held up in committee for several years, but fortunately the new leadership in Congress has moved swiftly to address this problem. The Spy Act was passed by the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection and now goes to the full Energy and Commerce Committee for its approval before it can be brought up for a vote by the U. S. House of Representatives. I will continue to push for its swift enactment into law.

Sincerely,

Darlene Hooley
Member of Congress