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Your medical privacy is under attack by politicians' "Unique Health Identifier"

There's less than a month to try to stop government's attack on privacy

WASHINGTON, DC — There's less than a month left to block a federal regulation that will permit thousands of businesses and government agencies — including banks, the FBI, and even the Environmental Protection Agency — to examine your private medical records without your consent, the Libertarian Party warned today.

And equally ominous: The same regulation will mandate that each American get a "Unique Health Identifier" — a Social Security Number-style identifier from the government that would follow you throughout your life and be permanently attached to all your medical records.

"If these proposals are enacted, you might as well post your health history on the Internet, because anyone who wants that information will have access to it," said Steve Dasbach, national director of the Libertarian Party. "These proposals are a devious attempt by the government to diminish your medical privacy — while claiming to protect it."

The new rules were unveiled by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in the *Federal Register* last month. The Clinton Administration claimed the proposals would "safeguard" Americans' medical privacy by making health-care companies responsible for any privacy lapses or violations.

But the real result will be to throw your private records wide open to dozens of government departments, for-profit businesses, and law enforcement agencies, said Dasbach — while stripping individuals of their right to protect their medical privacy.

"The government claims these rules are designed to protect you," he said.

"But trusting politicians to protect your medical privacy is like hiring Bill Clinton as night watchman at a girls' dormitory."

And because of the "Unique Health Identifier" provision, accessing health records could become "just as easy and convenient as accessing your credit history is now," he warned.

But the prognosis isn't all bad, said Dasbach: **There's still time to stop the proposal.**

"The HHS is accepting public comments on this proposal until January 3, 2000," he said. "The Libertarian Party is working to stop this medical spy scheme — by encouraging Americans to inundate the HHS with comments opposing this malignant plan." To comment, see the "Medical Privacy" link on the Libertarian Party's website: www.LP.org.

"When it comes to medical privacy, the government is the disease," said Dasbach. "Stopping this proposal is one way to keep our privacy — and liberty — a little healthier."

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