

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: **March 28, 2001**

Libertarians launch effort to stop raid on Americans' medical records

Uncle Sam wants your data. And we have until April 14 to stop him.

WASHINGTON, DC — Americans have less than three weeks to block a federal regulation that would require health care providers to turn medical records over to the government — which could then share them with third parties such as private marketers, police agencies, and even foreign governments.

"If this regulation is approved, you can kiss your medical privacy good-bye," said Steve Dasbach, Libertarian Party national director. "Soon a prospective employer, local cop or even a nosy neighbor with a government job may know if you've ever undergone drug or alcohol treatment, had an abortion or contracted an embarrassing disease."

The Libertarian Party has launched an Internet campaign to kill the regulation, based on the party's successful effort to derail the FDIC's "Know Your Customer" bank spying law in March, 1999, Dasbach announced. Americans can visit www.DefendYourPrivacy.com to e-mail their Congressional representative.

By April 14, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson must decide whether to implement the "medical privacy" rules submitted in the waning days of the Clinton administration. The rules, published in the Federal Register on December 28, 2000, mandate that every doctor and health care provider turn patient records over to the HHS and other federal agencies for "safekeeping" — regardless of whether patients consent.

"If you like the way the government protected the confidentiality of your Social Security number, you're going to love the way it protects your medical records," Dasbach said. The regulation would:

- Allow thousands of government agencies to access medical records, without patient consent, for "public health surveillance activities" and dozens of other purposes. Even the private notes of a psychotherapist could be accessed — and providers could refuse to treat people who refuse to surrender their records.

- Permit police agencies to access medical records without a search warrant.

- Allow foreign government officials to see Americans' health records, as long as the U.S. government claims it is being done for a "national health purpose."

"If these proposals aren't stopped, your medical privacy will be in critical condition," Dasbach said. "Fortunately, there's still time to act. Go to DefendYourPrivacy.com immediately and help us pull the plug on these frightening new regulations."

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