

Consumer Action

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March 16, 2012

Governor Jerry Brown
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Save the Office of Privacy Protection

Consumer Action is writing to urge you to preserve the California Office of Privacy Protection (COPP) in the state budget. With a modest staff of four, COPP provides direct assistance to over 5,000 Californians a year who contact the office about issues like identity theft, medical privacy, online privacy, and data security. The office also provides training to businesses and to state government on privacy issues, and has created an identity theft manual that is widely-used by law enforcement. Through its publications and community outreach, COPP also helps Californians understand how to safeguard their privacy in the presence of newer technologies such as social networking sites, smartphone apps, and mobile payments.

Consumer Action is a consumer education and advocacy non-profit which has been fighting for the rights of California consumers since 1971. Among our network of 8,000 community-based organizations are many whose members have directly benefited from the advice and resources provided by the Office of Privacy Protection. Just as important is the guidance and recommendations for “best practices” that the office provides for businesses, so that companies will not put consumers’ information unnecessarily at risk.

Eliminating this office with a staff of four and a budget of just over \$400,000 would have a very small effect on our state budget, but would send a distressing signal about the value of our citizens’ privacy. We are proud that California has been an historic leader in privacy protection, and the privacy-related issues and concerns this office handles have never been more important than they are today, making it especially important for California to continue its leadership on the privacy front. We hope that you will reconsider the elimination of this office.

Thank you for considering our views. Should you or your staff have any questions regarding our position, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Joe Ridout
Consumer Action