Castle Highlights Steps Delaware Veterans Can Take in Wake of Data Breach -- May 23, 2006

Hopes breach will help spur Congressional passage of his Data Security Legislation

Washington, D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle today stressed the importance of passing the Financial Data Protection Act, H.R. 3997 to protect against breaches such as the recent data security breach at the Department of Veterans Affairs. An electronic data file was stolen from the home of an employee of the Department on May 3, containing the names, birth dates and Social Security numbers of as many as 26.5 million veterans.

"I am hopeful that the recent breach at the Department of Veterans' Affairs will help spur Congressional passage of The Financial Data Protection Act, H.R. 3997 to help safeguard sensitive data and protect consumers. The bill works to protect consumers against data breaches and strengthens the notification process if a breach does occur. Specifically, it attempts to prevent breaches of data, mandates an investigation upon discovery of a breach, provides notice to any victim of a breach, provides financial fraud mitigation to the consumer and creates additional regulations. My hope is to move forward with this bill, perhaps making changes to cover federal departments and agencies in light of this recent event so that the most comprehensive financial data protection plan is in place.

"For anyone with questions, concerns or comments about the recent breach, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 302-736-1666 or 302-428-1902. As stated by the Department of Veterans Affairs, please remember to be attentive to your financial data, but do not feel the need to do anything drastic in light of these revelations. Be assured that the matter is being addressed and the hope is that in the end, not one veteran will be affected," Castle said.

Veterans who could potentially be harmed could include anyone discharged after 1975 and some of their spouses, as well as some veterans discharged before then who submitted a claim for VA benefits. Because the affected veterans could be vulnerable to credit card fraud if the burglars realize the value of the data, the Department is warning all veterans to be extra attentive to their bank statements, credit card statements and any statements relating to recent financial transactions. Under a new Federal law, everyone has the right to receive a free copy of their credit report once every 12 months from each of the three nationwide consumer reporting companies. To request a free annual report under that law, visit www.annualcreditreport.com. The Department also encourages veterans to visit their website at http://www.firstgov.gov/ or call 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636) for up-to-date information on the issue.