

Rates of infertility, the incidence of testicular cancer in young men, Parkinson's disease, autism, endometriosis, childhood diabetes, and asthma have risen dramatically since 1970.

Is there a connection between all of these events? There is reason to believe there might be, but the truth is we simply don't know enough to conclude one way or the other.

There is mounting evidence from the scientific community that exposure to certain environmental toxins, even at low doses, may cause adverse effects on development, growth, reproduction, metabolism, and other hormone-dependent processes in humans. Research interest is growing dramatically as our fear also grows that the pesticides, medicinal drugs, plant hormones, and industrial compounds that we confront every day may be causing many of our health ailments.

In its Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals released two weeks ago, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found disturbing exposure levels in individuals. The report calls for further research into this area to find out whether or not the levels CDC measured in its study lead to health problems.

Today, I am proud to introduce the Environmental Health Research Act. This bill would authorize the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to provide grants to either public or non-profit private groups to develop and operate six centers that would conduct research into women's environmental health, and to establish a comprehensive research program on the impact and occurrence of hormone disrupting chemicals as they affect human, ecological, and wildlife health.

This bill is enormously important, and long overdue. To date, federal research on hormone disruption and environmental toxins has been scattershot and underfunded. The research program authorized through this legislation will enable NIEHS to gather solid data about the dangers posed by some chemicals and the mechanisms through which they act. With this information in hand, we can make sensible, informed decisions and policies about our own and our children's health and well-being.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting the Hormone Disruption Research Act. We owe it to future generations to pursue this scientific research, which has implications for every one of us.

THE 85TH ANNIVERSARY OF
LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

HON. SANDER M. LEVIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 2003

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 85th anniversary of Lithuanian independence and the 13th anniversary of freedom from Soviet occupation. In Southfield, Michigan, the Lithuanian-American Community of Michigan will be gathering on Sunday, February 16, 2003 at Divine Providence Lithuanian Catholic Church to celebrate this historic event.

In February 1918, Lithuania declared its independence from Czarist Russia. During this period, Lithuanians were free to follow their

cultural traditions and express their national identity. The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939 caused Lithuania to spend the next five decades under Soviet domination, forced to deny their heritage, their language and their traditions.

Despite the military might and repressive acts of the Soviets, the Lithuanians never lost touch with their roots and never lost their will. Lithuania's re-established independence in 1990 served as a testament to the courage, endurance and strength of the Lithuanian people. I was fortunate enough to be in Lithuania as its people celebrated the regaining of its independence.

In the 13 short years since the re-establishment of its independence, Lithuania has made extraordinary advances in restoring democracy, ensuring human rights, securing the rule of law, developing a free market economy, and cultivating friendly relations with neighboring countries. Such achievements should be an inspiration to people everywhere.

Mr. Speaker, I unite with Lithuanian-Americans and Lithuanians around the world in celebrating their independence day.

INTRODUCTION OF THE PRIVACY
PROTECTION CLARIFICATION ACT

HON. JUDY BIGGERT

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 13, 2003

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my colleague, Mrs. MALONEY of New York, in introducing The Privacy Protection Clarification Act.

Gramm-Leach-Bliley was landmark legislation that for the first time permitted companies to engage in banking, insurance and securities transactions simultaneously. While considering these new freedoms for entities to operate across business lines, Congress also wanted to ensure that consumer privacy would not be placed at risk.

Title V sought to address this issue by giving regulators latitude to enforce privacy provisions among financial institutions. Unfortunately, in interpreting the language of the law, some confusion has arisen over what, specifically, those "financial institutions" might be.

Well, in seeking to clarify the confusion, the Federal Trade Commission concluded that "financial institutions" include any business that "significantly engages in financial activities." What's the definition of "significantly"? Well, it could be as little as once a year. And what's a financial activity? There are four: debt collecting, financial advisory activities, tax planning preparation and advising, and leasing real or personal property.

Okay, that's fair enough. But in writing its regulations in this way, the Federal Trade Commission appears to have unintentionally swept under its umbrella the one group of professionals that already is governed by the strictest possible confidentiality or privacy regulations.

What group is this? It's attorneys.

Attorneys already are bound by a duty of confidentiality, enforceable under the laws of all 50 states, that prevents misuse of client information and provides a higher degree of privacy than Gramm-Leach-Bliley. For example, lawyers in my home state, Illinois, are prohib-

ited from releasing confidential information. Our code reads, "except in certain specified circumstances, a lawyer shall not, during or after termination of the professional relationship with the client, use or reveal a confidence or secret of the client known to the lawyer unless the client consents after disclosure."

And Illinois is no exception. All 50 states have equally restrictive language. In all 50 states, lawyers who violate these laws face disbarment and/or other penalties that are much more onerous than those for a violation of Title V under Gramm-Leach-Bliley.

Do attorneys "significantly engage in financial activities" as defined by the FTC? Yes, some attorneys do give tax-planning advice. Others may handle debt collection cases.

Still others may take up cases related to the other two named "financial activities" providing financial advice or leasing real or personal property.

Yet in order to comply with the privacy provisions under Gramm-Leach-Bliley, these attorneys now run the risk of violating the client-confidentiality restrictions placed on their profession.

Why is that? Well, under the FTC interpretation, every attorney who engages in any of the four defined "financial activities" for a non-corporate client must mail to that client a privacy notice—every year, for as long as he or she is in practice. And what does that privacy notice convey? Well, it informs clients that they may direct their attorney not to share their personal information with other entities—the so-called "opt-out" provision of Gramm-Leach-Bliley. Yet the attorney-client confidentiality relationship is, by nature, an "opt-in" protection.

In short, for attorneys, the very act of disclosing a privacy policy can create a confidentiality violation.

This was not the intent of Congress. It was not our intent to regulate attorney-client relations. Our intent was to regulate the growing use and sale of consumers' personal information for marketing, profiling and other commercial purposes by banks, thrifts, securities firms, insurance companies, credit unions, and other bona fide financial institutions.

At the end of the day, our bill will make the intention of the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act crystal clear. The scope of the law was not intended to include law firms and sole practicing lawyers.

I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

RECOGNIZING THE COURAGE AND
SACRIFICE OF UNITED STATES
ARMED FORCES HELD AS PRISONERS
OF WAR DURING THE
VIETNAM CONFLICT AND CALLING
FOR A FULL ACCOUNTING
OF THOSE WHO REMAIN UNACCOUNTED
FOR

SPEECH OF

HON. JOSEPH R. PITTS

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, February 12, 2003

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, those of us who have served our country in war understand in our hearts what every American understands in his head. We understand what it says—carved in stone—on the Korean War