

THE SUPREME COURT OF MONTANA

KARLA M. GRAY
CHIEF JUSTICE

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The Honorable Jim Keane
Chair, Economic Affairs Interim Committee
P.O. Box 201706
Helena, MT 59620

Dear Representative Keane:

Thank you for your letter of February 16, 2006, advising of the Interim Committee's focus on identity theft and social security numbers. The Court shares your concerns. To that end, I assure you that the Judicial Branch will evaluate the instances in which we collect and maintain social security numbers.

As you might expect, the Judicial Branch may have more contact with social security numbers in the future as we take on the role of compiling court data and routing it, as directed by statute, to state agencies. As an example, our central repository for courts of limited jurisdiction will funnel conviction and suspension information to the Department of Justice. Before this occurs, though, the Court's Commission on Technology—and the Court—will approve access and privacy guidelines addressing the protection of social security numbers and other private data. I also have directed administrative staff to look at other areas where the Judicial Branch may directly collect social security numbers and ensure that such data is requested only where necessary, protected and used solely in the manner intended.

Again, thank you for bringing this matter to my attention. Good luck with your work.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Karla".

Karla M. Gray
Chief Justice

c: Beth McLaughlin, Acting Court Administrator