

# **Sen. Baldwin: Helps introduce legislation to give control of credit information back to consumers, protect personal data following Equifax hack**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin joined Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) and Brian Schatz (D-HI) in introducing the Freedom from Equifax Exploitation (FREE) Act to give control over credit and personal information back to consumers. The Equifax hack announced earlier this month, which compromised the personal information of as many as 143 million Americans, highlighted just how little control consumers have over the collection, use, and sale of their own credit data.

“Following the most recent data breach at Equifax, it is clear that we must do more to protect consumers. Credit reporting companies like Equifax, not only sell and collect consumer’s sensitive personal data without consumer consent, but they also charge consumers if they want to stop sharing that data,” said Senator Baldwin. “That’s not right. Consumer protection should be more important than profit. The Freedom from Equifax Exploitation Act will give consumers more control and help protect consumer privacy by prohibiting credit reporting companies like Equifax from charging their consumers for freezing and unfreezing their credit information.”

Credit reporting agencies like Equifax collect personal financial data on millions of Americans and rake in billions of dollars in annual revenue selling this information

to others. If consumers wish to limit how credit reporting agencies use this information – such as by placing a credit freeze on their credit file – they often have to pay a fee to the agency, even though consumers never gave the agency permission to collect their data in the first place. The Freedom from Equifax Exploitation Act helps address this problem by creating a federal requirement for credit reporting agencies to freeze (as well as temporarily or permanently unfreeze) access to credit files at a consumer’s request and at no cost.

The Freedom from Equifax Exploitation Act would also prevent credit reporting agencies from profiting off of consumers’ information during a freeze, enhance fraud alert protections, and provide the opportunity for consumers to receive an additional free credit report following the Equifax data breach. Finally, the bill would force Equifax and the other credit reporting agencies to refund any fees they charged for credit freezes in the wake of the Equifax data breach.

Additional original co-sponsors of the legislation include Senators Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Edward J. Markey (D-MA), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Richard Durbin (D-IL), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), and Al Franken (D-MN).

The legislation has received endorsements from the National Consumer Law Center (on behalf of its low-income clients), U.S. PIRG, MASSPIRG, Tennessee Citizen Action, Consumer Action, Americans for Financial Reform, CREDO, National Association of Consumer Advocates, and the Consumer Federation of America.

A summary of the legislation is available [here](#).

A copy of the bill text is available [here](#).

An online version of this release is available [here](#).