

**CONFERENCE OF CHIEF JUSTICES
CONFERENCE OF STATE COURT ADMINISTRATORS**

Resolution 29

In Support of Congress Working with State Courts on the Issue of Social Security Number Redaction Requirement

WHEREAS, personal information has been used in ways harmful or damaging to individuals, as witnessed by reports of identity theft which has grown by 40 percent in each of the past two years; and

WHEREAS, Congress is considering legislation to protect individual privacy by regulating state government and business information practices; and

WHEREAS, an aspect of this effort is to require state and local governmental entities, such as state courts, to redact or expunge social security numbers from public documents; and

WHEREAS, social security numbers are pervasive in state court documents as, for example, a means of identifying parties in cases and collecting fines and restitution; and

WHEREAS, social security numbers appear in innumerable records appended to documents filed in courts; and

WHEREAS, many federal laws, such as the welfare reform law, require courts to enter social security numbers on court orders granting divorces, ordering child support payments or determining paternity; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to make courts more open and accessible, many court systems are placing court records on the Internet, and a requirement to redact social security numbers from court records could end these openness initiatives, thus increasing the alienation many citizens feel toward government; and

WHEREAS, courts would have enormously increased labor costs in staff time to remove social security numbers if a redaction requirement were imposed;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Conference of Chief Justices and the Conference of State Court Administrators note their grave concern over the courts' ability to meet the social security number redaction requirements in proposed privacy protection legislation and urge Congress to work with the Conferences to find effective solutions to this matter.

Adopted as proposed by the CCJ/COSCA Court Management Committee in Rockport, Maine on August 1, 2002.