

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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H.B. 853
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Business & Commerce
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Engrossed

AUTHOR'S/SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Many national retailers have begun to use outside companies to compile consumer information, including a person's name and driver's license number, to place into national databases. These databases are intended to be used to prevent frequent returns by tracking consumers who make a habit of returning merchandise. Although this may be a valid business concern, the rights to privacy of personal information by consumers who legally return merchandise in good faith are being impacted.

H.B. 853 provides that merchants who require consumers to provide a driver's license or social security number when returning merchandise should use that information for identification purposes only.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter D, Chapter 35, Business & Commerce Code, by adding Section 35.581, as follows:

Sec. 35.581. COLLECTION OF IDENTIFYING INFORMATION FOR RETURN OF MERCHANDISE. (a) Authorizes a merchant who requires a consumer returning an item of merchandise to provide the consumer's driver's license or social security number to use the number or numbers provided by the consumer for identification purposes only.

(b) Prohibits a merchant from disclosing a consumer's driver's license or social security number to a person who will use the information in a manner that results in the compilation or tracking of information regarding merchandise returned by consumers, including the frequency with which a particular consumer returns merchandise.

(c) Provides that a person who violates this section is liable to the state for a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed \$500 for each violation. Authorizes the attorney general or the prosecuting attorney in the county in which the violation occurs to bring suit to recover the civil penalty imposed under this section.

(d) Authorizes the attorney general to bring an action in the name of the state to restrain or enjoin a person from violating this section.

SECTION 2. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2005.