

NEWS

From the Office of

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Supervisors Approve Recorder's Plan to Protect Identities

SAN BERNARDINO – The San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors today approved a plan presented by County Recorder Larry Walker to protect citizens from identity theft by shielding social security numbers on recorded documents such as property deeds, liens and some court documents.

“Identity theft has been a significant problem in the Inland Empire and this program will provide one more layer of protection for county residents,” said First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt. “A person’s social security number is the single most useful tool of the identity thief – this program seeks to take that tool away.”

Through the County Recorder’s Social Security Number Truncation Program, the Recorder’s Office will create an electronic “public record” version of each official recorded document containing a social security number. The public version would be the same as the official version, except that the first five digits of the social security number would be redacted. The public version of the document will be the only one available to the general public, in place of the official record.

The County Recorder will carry out the program on all documents recorded since 1980, so that almost all documents recorded since that date will be contained in the new “Public Records”, without the full social security number showing. Exceptions will exist where other law specifically requires a social security number to be on a specific document.

After implementing the retroactive program, the Recorder will continue to truncate social security numbers from newly recorded documents, in order to keep the new “Public Records” up to date. County Auditor/Controller-Recorder Larry Walker reported to the Board of Supervisors that legislation has been proposed to prohibit presentation of documents to the County Recorder if they contain a social security number, which would reduce the need for redaction.

“We will continue to see proposals to improve the protection of the privacy of our constituents,” said Walker. “My commitment is to assure the maximum privacy of our constituents, while preserving the system of recorded documents, which is a legal foundation for home ownership and for the real estate finance industry which makes home ownership possible,” Walker added. “I thank the Board of Supervisors for their continuing support of these efforts.”

“I commend Larry Walker for his leadership in developing this program to prevent ID theft,” added Supervisor Mitzelfelt.