

Oregon ranked third in nation for ID theft complaints

From the Desk of
**Senator
Alan Olsen**



Laura Fesmire, Statesman Journal 4:32 p.m. PST March 4, 2015



(Photo: RICK NEASE, GANNETT)

Oregon was ranked the third-highest state in the nation in 2014 for identity theft complaint rates per capita, according to a [report released Wednesday by the Federal Trade Commission](http://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/consumer-sentinel-network-data-book-january-december-2014/sentinel-cy2014.pdf) (<http://www.ftc.gov/system/files/documents/reports/consumer-sentinel-network-data-book-january-december-2014/sentinel-cy2014.pdf>).

Additionally, both Salem and the Portland metropolitan area ranked in the top 50 cities nationwide for the same thing.

According to officials with the National Consumers League, Oregon's climb to no. 3 is a recent problem.

"Oregon traditionally has been ranked in the 30s in terms of per capita ID theft complaint rates for the FTC," said John Breyault, vice president of the National Consumers League. "And then this year (2014), they jumped to no. 3. And it looks like it's been because of a significant increase in the number of complaints about tax ID theft."

The only two states with higher rates of identity theft complaints were Florida and Washington.

Oregon reported 4,946 identity theft complaints to the FTC for 2014. That means that for every 100,000 people, there were approximately 124 complaints of identity theft.

More than 60 percent of Oregon's identity theft complaints were related to government documents or tax fraud.

"That's pretty much a jump of over 3,000 complaints about identity theft coming from Oregon," Breyault said. "We've certainly seen government documents and tax ID fraud as a big concern for a number of years, but that certainly seems to be what's driving the increase in documents and benefits fraud."

So what is it about Oregon specifically that's leading to such a high number of complaints? Breyault said he didn't know.

It could be that Oregonians are simply falling into identity theft traps more than other states. Or it could be heightened awareness leading to an increasing number of complaints.

"It's entirely possible," Breyault said. "The data in this report is entirely self-submitted, so there's a self-selection bias. It's possible that letting people know where and how they can complain means they will."

The FTC report also examined complaints of fraud and found that Florida led the nation with the highest per capita rate of reported fraud.

In terms of general fraud, Oregon ranked 29th, with 505 complaints per 100,000 people.

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