
ASPA BUZZ

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ASPA Luncheon

Friday, December 7, 2007
12:00 Noon

Auditorium of the State Office Building
(north of the State Capitol Building)

Robert Farrington

Salt Lake Chamber

Dan Lofgren

Cowboy Partners

Update on Downtown Development

Our speakers will provide an update on the vision of Downtown Rising – what the plan looks like and what we are expecting for the changes in downtown in terms of business, retail and residential.

Please make your reservations early. The luncheon will be catered. Reservations or cancellations must be received no later than **Tuesday, December 4th**. No shows will be billed. Limited parking is available—please carpool or ride public transportation where possible

The cost of the luncheon is \$12.00 for ASPA members, \$15.00 for nonmembers and \$6.00 for students.

Please call the Center for Public Policy and Administration, University of Utah, at 581-6493 or e-mail jrandall@cpga.utah.edu for reservations.

Identity Theft and What to do About it

By Tricia Jack

Center for Public Policy & Administration, University of Utah

KIRK TORGENSEN, Chief Deputy of the Attorney General's Office warned us all about the perils of identity theft – the fastest growing crime in the U.S. Many police departments are so overwhelmed with it that some victims cannot even get a police report filed. The explosion of identity theft in Utah is partly due to the meth problem. A lot of criminals are meth addicts and identity theft is much safer than other crimes because the risk of getting caught is much less.

The problem with identity theft is that you can do everything right to protect yourself and still be a victim – the goal is to minimize the risk. Prompt action is the key. If the problem goes on for too long, you are in for a nightmare and there is not much that can be done. Statistics say that the average victim spends around 600 hours cleaning up their name and innocent people can be taken to jail because of identity theft.

Mr Torgensen gave some tips on minimizing the risk of identity theft:

- Be careful with your wallet and purse. For example, identity thieves prey on unsuspecting victims in the grocery store when these items are often left unattended for a moment. If they steal your wallet containing a lot of personal information, they can easily steal your identity.
- You should use a solid, locked mail box or consider using a post office box address. Mail theft is the #1 source of identity information for thieves in Utah. Lockable mail boxes are available on the internet. Also, never leave mail in the box with the red flag up. This just attracts thieves.
- Minimize the amount of mail containing personal information that comes to your home such as bank and credit card statements. Try using internet banking and online statements rather than paper statements. If you are using internet banking with a wireless connection, make sure that an effective security system is in place.
- Opt out of receiving unsolicited, pre-approved credit card applications. It is advisable to call the companies you do business with and tell them not to send any unsolicited mail. To opt out go to (<https://www.optoutprescreen.com>).
- Be careful about what you throw in your garbage. Shredding documents will help a lot, but be aware that cross-cut shredders are much better. Straight shredders create “jigsaw puzzles for meth addicts.”
- Regularly reconcile your bank and credit card statements. This will help you to spot any unauthorized charges.
- Protect your debit card information, especially your PIN. Be aware that some debit cards are not treated like a credit card and may not be protected against fraudulent charges. Ask your bank if your debit card is protected.

- Be careful about responding to emails asking for personal information. They may look authentic but most often are not. Remember that legitimate businesses do not send unsolicited emails asking for your information. If you are unsure, call and check. The latest scam is an email coming from the IRS advising of a tax refund but requesting verification of personal information.
- Check your credit reports regularly to look for information in your credit report that makes no sense, e.g., credit cards you have never had or an address where you have never lived. Last year the federal government passed the FACT act which allows everyone to get a free credit report from each of the three credit agencies once a year. To access this, go to www.annualcreditreport.com- not the “free credit report” advertisements, some of which may be imposters.

What to do if you think you are a victim

Mr. Torgensen gave some advice on what to do if you think you are a victim:

- Call one of the credit agencies and have a fraud alert put on your account. You will then be notified and asked to approve any credit card request.
- Consider freezing your credit. This stops any new credit applications; the freeze can be unthawed in as little as 15 minutes by providing a password and PIN. The cost of freezing your credit is about \$10.00.

Mr Torgensen told the group that the Attorney General’s Office in Utah recently won an award for the best website on identity theft. (www.idtheft.utah.gov). It contains a lot of useful information and links. The FTC’s website also has good information. Access at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/microsites/idtheft/>

Mr. Torgensen closed by urging the group to be careful and to take precautions to prevent identity theft. His message was very informative. Take heed!

Tentative Schedule of ASPA Luncheon Topics for 2007-2008	
January	Annual Legislative Preview
February 1	Health Care
March 7	Legislative Follow-up
April 4	Transportation
May 2	ASPA Awards/Public Service Recognition Week

COUNCIL CORNER

Sandy Peck
League of Women Voters
ASPA Council Member

Election Officials and the Right to Vote

We just survived an important election with more coming soon, so we, at the League of Women Voters, are feeling very appreciative of the work our public, state and county elections officials do to protect citizens' right to vote. Although it may not be spelled out in the Constitution as a right (have you ever wondered why?), voting is essential to a democracy. It's the great equalizer, giving every voter an equal voice no matter his or her financial wealth or station in life.

Election officials face some tough challenges these days, especially since the 2000 presidential election in Florida. Utah's punch cards – which were working pretty well if the right card stock was used and equipment was cleaned – have been replaced by touch screen computers. Most voters like the new equipment although some, including some computer experts, don't fully trust them. They prefer optical scanners. Adding paper trails and elaborate audit procedures to ensure secure and accurate counts increases the cost of these machines, already inflated by considerable storage and security costs and the need to hire and train more poll workers to tend them. Officials in populous counties worry that they can't afford enough machines to avoid long lines and exasperated voters. But they are resourceful, enlisting computer-savvy youth, initiating programs to ask businesses to excuse employees for poll worker duty, and urging voters to vote early or permanently register absentee so they won't have to stand in line.

Over the years, in cooperation with legislators (well, *some* legislators), they have worked to make voter registration easier. You can now register at driver license and other public offices. You can register by mail using forms available at libraries and post offices (there is even an application on page 47 of your phone book). You can register on line by printing off a form and mailing it in. Some clerks registered voters at convenient satellite locations close to Election Day until legislators put a stop to that last year. Sad to say, it seems some legislators don't really want *every* eligible citizen to vote, just the citizens who were discerning enough to put them into office last election.

Immigration is heating up another longstanding issue, whether voters should present ID, especially photo ID, when they vote. Most studies show little evidence that voters successfully pretend to be someone they are not, but election officials take some precautions, in part to comply with the federal Help America Vote Act. The registration application now requires your driver license or state ID number, the last four digits of your Social Security number, and place of naturalization, if applicable. You must sign a citizenship affidavit. The penalty for voting fraud (up to one year in jail and a fine of up to \$2,500) is on the application.

Until we see more evidence of voter fraud, we worry more about the elderly, poor and homeless who often lack photo ID, people who were adopted and lack birth certificates, people with disabilities who can't get to the polls and the thousands who change their addresses or names without re-registering. Please, people, if you move you must re-register so you can vote for the candidates who will actually represent your community. We worry about the uninformed and uninterested who don't realize that their votes count.

As for the right to vote, some say it is not a right but a privilege. But a privilege has to be granted by someone and can be taken away, and right off hand I can't think of anyone I want to have that power over me. At a Hinckley Institute forum, historian Alexander Keyssar was asked why people who don't bother to register on time or get informed on the issues should be allowed to vote. His answer was that they have needs that should be responded to by a democratic society. Works for me!

SPOTLIGHT – New ASPA Council Member

MATT DUMONT has been with the Salt Lake County Sheriff's Office for the past ten years and is currently assigned to the Jail Programs Division that oversees the Treatment and Education Unit. The unit provides programs designed to re-integrate prisoners back into the community based on the needs of the prisoners. Some of the classes offered include substance abuse, mental health, adult education, and life skills.

Matt enjoys spending time camping and skiing with his family. More recently, he began coaching his son's little league football team. Matt is also the 2007-08 president of the Utah Chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha.

According to Matt, "I am looking forward to the upcoming year with ASPA. We have an exciting group of speakers lined up, covering a wide range of subjects. I hope we will see you there."

We welcome Matt to the ASPA Council!

ASPA COUNCIL – UTAH CHAPTER

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