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University of San Diego

Office of Public Relations

News Bureau

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CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEREST LAW TO INVESTIGATE CONSUMERS' PRIVACY RIGHTS

Californians concerned about whether new technology is stripping them of their privacy will soon have a place to turn for information on their rights.

The University of San Diego School of Law's Center for Public Interest Law today (June 17, 1992) was awarded a \$157,000 grant to establish a privacy research clearinghouse. The grant was awarded by the California Public Utilities Commission's Telecommunications Education Trust.

"Consumers need information on new technologies such as the recently-approved Caller ID service. That way, they will know what steps to take to preserve their privacy," said Beth Givens, Program Manager of the Center's Privacy Research Clearinghouse.

Caller ID, which was just approved by the state Public Utilities Commission, will give subscribers the phone number of

(more)

incoming calls on a special display screen. The person placing the call may not know his phone number is being logged.

"With a telephone number and access to computerized information services, a great deal of personal information, including financial data, can be easily uncovered. We'll provide consumer information on issues like this and act as a clearinghouse for people who believe their privacy rights have been violated," Givens explained.

The Privacy Research Clearinghouse plans a toll-free 800 number for consumers to call and register their complaints and concerns about privacy. A series of fact sheets with information on privacy rights and options will also be developed. Topics covered will include:

- * Caller ID and related phone number identification systems
- * Direct mail and telephone marketing
- * Privacy in the workplace
- * Cordless and cellular phones
- * Credit cards and check writing
- * Existing state and federal privacy laws
- * Privacy-protection tips

"It has been said this is the information age, but many people are worried about how much information on them is out there. We plan to help consumers gain the benefits of new technology while protecting their privacy," Givens said.