

Kelley Opposes Bills To Seal Arrest Data

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FBI Director Clarence M. Kelley said yesterday he supports legislation to regulate the use of criminal information, but he charged that certain segments of three proposed bills would hamper law enforcement.

Those segments of a Justice Department bill and measures introduced by Sen. Sam J. Ervin Jr. (D-N.C.) and Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.) "could severely restrict or preclude the effective use" of crime data to catch criminals, he said.

At the end of his testimony before a House Judiciary subcommittee, Rep. Robert F. Drinan (D-Mass.) told him, "You seem to go along and cut the heart out of these bills." Drinan said Kelley was, in effect, objecting to all provisions of the Ervin bill and seeking to "set aside, downgrade, and sometimes openly reject parts" of the department's bill.

All three bills would restrict

the way local, state, and federal agencies collect and disseminate crime data. The purpose of the legislation is to protect people against misuse of crime information which could lead to denial of jobs, credit or insurance. The congressional bills contain more stringent restrictions than the department's bill.

For instance, the Justice bill would require the sealing of arrest records seven years after a person's release from prison or probation in felony cases and five years after release in misdemeanor cases. Ervin's bill has the same requirement but would allow states to purge the old records completely. Edwards would require purging after certain periods.

Kelley said that while studies show that most criminal repeaters commit additional crimes within the five-or seven-year periods, not all of them do.