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MEDIA: An awkward ad by [Fred Thompson](#);  
He promotes the firm of a man once accused of deceiving consumers.

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Possible presidential candidate [Fred D. Thompson](#) is lending his voice to radio commercials for a company that says it fights identity thieves and that was co-founded by a man accused of taking money from consumer bank accounts without permission.

The one-minute commercials are airing across the country on behalf of Tempe, Ariz.-based [Lifelock Inc.](#), which said nearly 200,000 customers pay about \$10 a month for services that include placing fraud alerts on their credit files.

[Lifelock](#) was co-founded in 2005 by Robert J. Maynard Jr., whom the Federal Trade Commission accused in 1996 of deceiving consumers with advertisements that suggested his credit-repair company could remove records of bankruptcies and delinquent payments.

The FTC also alleged that Maynard and another executive at National Credit Foundation Inc. collected checking-account data from its customers for "verification" when the real purpose was to make unauthorized withdrawals from those accounts.

Maynard settled both allegations with the FTC in 1997 without admitting wrongdoing but agreed to be barred from "advertising, promoting, offering for sale, selling, performing or distributing any product or service relating to credit-improvement services."

[Thompson's](#) spokesman, Mark Corallo, said the former senator from Tennessee and actor, best known for his role as the district attorney on NBC television's "Law & Order," did not research the company before becoming [Lifelock's](#) pitchman.

Corallo said ABC Radio asked [Thompson](#), as well as other hosts of its syndicated talk programs, to endorse [Lifelock](#), an advertiser on its stations.

[Thompson](#) has been a commentator and host of ABC Radio specials since 2006.

"It's part of the contract," Corallo said. "You can't expect the individual on-air personality to do research on every company."

[Thompson](#) pulled out of "Law & Order" in June to explore a possible Republican presidential bid.

In an interview Friday, Maynard blamed his earlier problems with bipolar disorder, which he said left him destitute and relying on food stamps before he rebuilt his life.

[Lifelock](#) Chief Executive Todd Davis said his company wasn't affected by the FTC order because [Lifelock's](#) system for protecting credit ratings wasn't related to credit improvement.

Maynard served as chief operating officer until this year. He is now responsible for [Lifelock's](#) advertising and marketing and continues to own stock in the company, Davis said.

[Lifelock's](#) customers entrust the company with a wealth of sensitive information, including Social Security numbers, and they grant it limited power of attorney to facilitate its interactions with credit bureaus.

The system is so secure that neither he nor any other executives could access the information without a record being created, Maynard said.

Maynard and Davis founded **Lifelock** shortly after Maynard filed for bankruptcy protection from his personal debts for a second time.

Davis said Maynard's past had no bearing on the quality of **Lifelock's** services and that the prominent venture capitalists that have invested millions of dollars in **Lifelock** knew about Maynard's bankruptcies and FTC settlement.

**Lifelock** backers Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers and Bessemer Venture Partners declined interview requests.

In **Thompson's** commercials, the deep-voiced actor recounts a tale of military heroism in Iraq, then introduces himself and says **Lifelock's** service can stop identity theft and is offered free to deployed members of the military.

"While our heroes are protecting us, we have a duty to protect them," **Thompson** says in his familiar, folksy cadence.

"I urge you to contact **Lifelock**."

Although much of what **Lifelock** does can be done by consumers themselves for free, the company has attracted wide media attention, including from CNN and MSNBC, in part because of Maynard's knack for promotion.

Maynard has told reporters that he was inspired to start **Lifelock** after being wrongly jailed in 2003 for an unpaid secured casino debt known as a marker, which, under Nevada law, is treated as a bad check, a criminal offense.

Maynard said his identity had been stolen and the fraud cost him thousands of dollars.

But as first reported May 31 in Phoenix New Times, that media-friendly story may be misleading.

After his arrest, Maynard never told authorities he wasn't responsible for the \$16,080 debt racked up at the Mirage in Las Vegas.

The funds were wired on his behalf to cover the debt, Maynard was released and the charges were dropped.

Maynard said Friday that he didn't tell Vegas authorities about his identity theft because a day after his arrest, his wife filed for sole custody of their children and the only way he could appear in court was to get out of jail quickly by paying the debt.

Clark County, Nev., Chief Deputy Dist. Atty. Bernie Zadrowski, however, said in an interview this week that "we could show beyond a shadow of a doubt that he was the one who committed the crime."

That's because the Mirage had on file two different drivers' licenses that had been supplied by the gambler at different times, suggesting that an identity thief would have had to steal each separately.

Both matched the photo from Maynard's arrest in Arizona, Zadrowski said.

Maynard said one license had been issued in California to someone posing as him. But Zadrowski said neither license was from California. Davis said **Lifelock** was conducting its own investigation into the Las Vegas story. "I could certainly see how someone would want to know those details," he said.

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