

Bipartisan House Bill is a Significant Step Forward in the Fight to Stop Unwanted Robocalls

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Washington, D.C. – Today, the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR), chair and ranking member, respectively, of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce. The bill is also sponsored by Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA) and Rep. Bob Latta (R-OH). “This bipartisan bill is an important step forward in the fight to stop unwanted and illegal robocalls,” **said National Consumer Law Center Senior Counsel Margot Saunders.**

The bill would provide new protections from robocallers by requiring the Federal Communications Commission to 1) issue comprehensive regulations to stop unwanted and illegal automated calls and texts, 2) implement meaningful call authentication technology (so Caller ID is once again reliable), and 3) ensure that call blocking programs are not charged to consumers. The bill also requires the FCC to create a database that callers can check to avoid making robocalls to a telephone number that has been reassigned to someone else. It incorporates all the protections of the TRACED Act recently passed by the U.S. Senate, and goes farther by making the TRACED Act’s call authentication and call blocking requirements applicable not just to the largest phone companies, but also those serving rural areas..

“There’s still more to be done and there is a lot of responsibility placed on the FCC to protect consumers,” **added Saunders.** “Robocalls plague voters of all political stripes so we are especially pleased to see a bipartisan effort on this bill. We hope this is the first of several positive steps that Congress will take.”

Robocalls surged after a 2018 decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals in D.C. that set aside a 2015 FCC order on the question of how to interpret the Telephone Consumer Protection Act’s (TCPA’s) ban on autodialed calls to cell phones without the called party’s consent. This decision raised the specter that the prohibition might be interpreted not to cover the autodialing systems that are currently used to deluge cell phones with unwanted calls. Last year, Americans received more than 47 billion robocalls, with 60 billion estimated for this year. In May 2019, 9 of the top 10 robocallers were collectors attempting to collect on debts owed to well-known businesses, including Capital One, Wells Fargo, Santander, and Comcast, according to YouMail.

More information on NCLC’s extensive work on illegal robocalls is available at:
<https://nclc-old.ogosense.net/issues/robocalls-and-telemarketing.html>