

Opening Statement
Chairman Mike Doyle
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Markup of “Stopping Bad Robocalls Act”
June 25, 2019 2pm
Rayburn 2123

Welcome everyone to today’s Subcommittee on Communications and Technology markup of legislation to address a problem that we all have first-hand experience with, robo-calls.

Unwanted Robocalls have exploded, topping out at nearly 48 billion last year, a 60% increase in volume from the year before. That number is estimated to increase to 60 billion this year. And while some of these calls constituted legitimate alerts and reminders, such calls accounted for only 20 percent of the robocalls people receive each year.

In the month of May alone, my hometown of Pittsburgh received an estimated 35 million robocalls.

The problem has gotten so bad that Congressman Soto got robocalled in the middle of our legislative hearing on Robocalls.

Today, the Subcommittee will markup Chairman Pallone’s “Stopping Bad Robocalls Act.”

This legislation is a thoughtful response to the onslaught of billions of illegal robocalls Americans face every day. On average, everyone in this country receives 14 of these calls a day. This bill is a comprehensive bipartisan solution that I believe will help seriously reduce the number of robo-calls consumers receive.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of this legislation along with our colleagues, Ranking Members Walden and Latta. I’m also happy to see that language from the Support Tools to Obliterate Pesky Robo Calls Act or STOP Robo Calls Act, which Ranking Member Latta and I introduced, was also included in the base text of this bill.

The bill before the Subcommittee today is the result of bipartisan negotiations which included industry and public interest stakeholders. I’m glad that these discussions have resulted in a strong bill that will help address this urgent issue.

After Ranking Member Latta and I introduced the STOP Robocalls Act, which would have allowed phone carriers to enable Robocall blocking services on customers phone lines by default, the FCC moved forward to implement this proposal as part of a declaratory ruling.

I’m glad to see that provisions in this bill would ensure that these services do not result in new consumer fees for robo-call blocking services – and provides redress for callers and consumers when a call is blocked incorrectly.

Beyond these provisions, this bill does much to address many of the technological and regulatory shortfalls that have led to the rise in robocalls.

The bill requires all carriers to adopt call authentication technology that would enable people to be certain that the number you see on your call ID is really the number the call is coming from. All too often, people get calls

that look they are coming from down the street – but which are actually coming from scammers half a world away.

The bill also seeks to limit the number of nuisance robocalls consumers receive by ensuring that callers have consumers' consent before they robocall them, and it would require a series of rulemakings by the FCC to update their current rules to ensure that these rules protect consumers.

The bill also extends the statute of limitations for illegal robocalls to ensure that federal authorities have sufficient time to take legal action against spammers and scammers who make these calls.

All in all, this is a strong bill and a good compromise. It shows what Democrats and Republicans can accomplish when we put our heads together to address a critical issue. I'm glad to be marking it up today.

There are also a number of bipartisan amendments, including an amendment from Ms. Clarke and Mr. Bilirakis addressing the One Ring Scam and an amendment from Mr. McEachin and Mr. Olson addressing the lack of criminal prosecution of illegal robocalls by the Department of Justice.

There is also an amendment from Reps. Butterfield, Johnson, Soto, and Giantforte regarding the industry-led trace-back group, which works with the FCC to traceback the source of these illegal robocalls to help carriers identify and potentially block calls from carriers that facilitate illegal robocalling.

Mr. Soto also has an amendment that would require the Attorney General to create an interagency working group to address robocalls, offered on behalf of Mr. Crist who's bill this is based on.

I also understand that Ms. Eshoo has an amendment that we are still working on. I hope that we can work together on that amendment as this bill goes to full committee.

These are good amendments which I intend to support, and I encourage my colleagues to support the amendments and support forwarding this bill onto the full Committee.

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