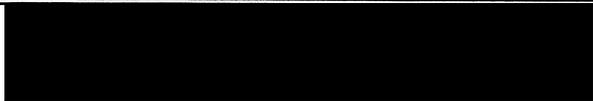


# CounterTop Creations, Inc.

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September 6, 2016

Congressman Shimkus,

My name is Steven Dodson, president of CounterTop Creations Inc. in Dahlgren IL. For the past 20 years I have owned and ran a high pressure laminate countertop fabrication business. My office is the heart of my business. It contains land line phones and a fax machine. These two pieces of equipment are as crucial to my business as the \$30,000 countertop saw in my shop. Why, you may ask? Because that is how my customers get their orders and quote requests to me. If the phone or fax lines are down, my office is down.

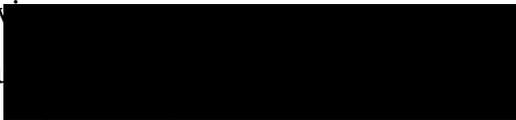
Over the past several years I have experienced an increase in problems with my land line phones. Some of the issues are:

- Dropped calls.
- Delayed calls.
- It rings and no one is there.
- It rings and the caller ID does not match the origin of call.
- Customers in another town can't get a fax to go through to my machine. This is a chronic issue that is detrimental to my business.
- Customers report calling my number and getting an automated error message in Spanish. Then try again and it goes through just fine.

When the phone and fax aren't working correctly, I am losing money. That is not an exaggeration that is a fact. If my customers can't fax over their countertop drawings and can't call me to give them to me over the phone, they will go somewhere else. I have several customers who have no other way to submit orders and quote requests than fax. A few of my customers can scan and email their items to me, but it is a small percentage of my overall customer base. The only fall back is to mail them to me and I don't want to get into the unreliable mess our rural mail system has become in the last couple of years.

It's not just my business that suffers, it's all businesses in rural IL trying to make a living and contribute to the economy of IL. Without work coming in to my shop I can't afford to employ people. Without employees I have no business. Then it just continues on down the line as a hardship on the state. I would appreciate any help our government can give to resolve the issues we are having.

Thank you



Steven L Dodson, President  
CounterTop Creations Inc.