



COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

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Pallone Statement at Robocalls Hearing

Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following remarks at the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Hearing on “Modernizing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act”:

If you think you are getting more robocalls than ever—you’re probably right. Just this past month a record 2.6 billion robocalls flooded our cell phones, work phones, and home phones. These calls are more than just a nuisance. They can add up to harassment or even outright fraud.

When Congress first passed the Telephone Consumer Protection Act 25 years ago, we stated that consumers were already “outraged over the proliferation of intrusive, nuisance calls to their homes.” Back then, we sought to balance individuals’ privacy rights, public safety interests, and commercial freedoms of speech and trade. And for a time, the law worked.

Unfortunately, a little over a decade later, these nuisance calls were on the rise again, but this time the calls did not only cause a nuisance many of them sought to defraud consumers. According to the Federal Trade Commission, consumer complaints of unwanted telemarketing calls increased over one-thousand percent between 1998 and 2002. Congress stepped in once more to stop this dramatic surge in calls. We required the FTC to create a Do Not Call Registry, among other things—again, turning back the tide of unwanted calls.

Almost like clockwork, however, nuisance calls were rebounding again nearly a decade later. Robocallers were finding new ways to circumvent the systems. The law simply wasn’t keeping up.

The FCC tried to reduce these robocalls, but they keep coming. By 2012, the FCC was receiving an average of over 10,000 complaints per month from mobile phones alone. And that number has only continued to grow to the point where last year, the FCC received more than 170,000 robocall and telemarketing complaints.

Last month, the FCC convened a new Robocall Strike Force, hoping to leverage the industry in the FCC’s ongoing effort. I commend the Commission for working so diligently to address this issue, but the fact that the FCC’s actions are not reducing the number of robocalls

demonstrates that it is time for Congress to once again step in. I urge the Strike Force to continue to look for technical and regulatory solutions to this problem, but Congress has a role as well.

That's why I joined ranking members Eshoo and Schakowsky last month in asking that the Committee hold a hearing on updating the TCPA. Our constituents are rightfully growing impatient with these calls, and they expect us to fix the problem. I appreciate that Chairman Walden agreed to our request for this hearing, and I also want to thank the phone carriers for offering to work with us to address this problem. It is not a moment too soon. We all need to work together to solve this problem.

We acted to protect consumers in 1991 and in 2003. Now, 13 years later, we should again put the FTC and FCC back on firm footing, so they can step up to protect consumers from these annoying and so often dangerous calls.

With that, I'd like to thank all of our witnesses for testifying today, and yield the balance of my time to Ms. Schakowsky.

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