



April 29, 2019

The Honorable Michael F. Doyle, Chairman  
The Honorable Robert E. Latta, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Doyle and Ranking Member Latta:

Consumer Reports<sup>1</sup> thanks you for holding this hearing to explore the problem of unwanted robocalls. Robocalls continue to plague consumers, disrupting peace of mind, interrupting important time with family, and enabling scams to enter consumers' homes. Truecaller found in 2018 that consumers had lost nearly \$9 billion to phone scams in a 12-month period.<sup>2</sup> And neighbor spoofing, in which a caller spoofs the first six digits of the caller ID, is a significant problem, impeding call-blocking services and tricking consumers into picking up the phone.<sup>3</sup>

A new Consumer Reports national survey released earlier this month found that 70 percent of consumers don't even pick up the phone anymore if they don't recognize the number, because their phones are so overrun with unwanted robocalls.<sup>4</sup>

Consumer Reports has been working for a number of years to strengthen consumer protections against unwanted and invasive robocalling. We are encouraged to see several bills introduced that will help achieve this goal.

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<sup>1</sup> Consumer Reports is an independent, nonprofit member organization that works side by side with consumers for truth, transparency, choice, and fairness in the marketplace. Founded in 1936, Consumer Reports has the largest nonprofit educational and consumer product testing center in the world, and uses its dozens of labs, auto test center, and survey research center to rate thousands of products and services annually. CR's premier magazine Consumer Reports has more than 3.6 million subscribers, and the award-winning CR.org has 2.9 million paying members and more than 15 million unique visitors monthly, on average. We use our rigorous research, consumer insights, journalism, and policy expertise to inform purchase decisions, improve the products and services that businesses deliver, and drive effective legislation and regulation -- to create a fairer, safer, and healthier world.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Fai Kok, *Truecaller Insights Reveal: Estimated 24.9M Americans Lost \$8.9B in Phone Scams as Rate of Spam Calls Jumps 22%* (Apr. 26, 2018), <https://truecaller.blog/2018/04/26/truecaller-insights-usa-2018/>.

<sup>3</sup> Fed. Comm'n Comm'n, *Caller ID Spoofing* (last updated Mar. 4, 2019), <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/spoofing-and-caller-id>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.consumerreports.org/robocalls/mad-about-robocalls/>.

We strongly support H.R. 946, the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act. This legislation would make a number of important improvements, including: ensuring that the definition of “autodialer” clearly covers all technology used to make robocalls and robotexts; affirming a consumer’s right to revoke consent in any reasonable manner; strengthening FCC enforcement authority against unlawful robocalling; and requiring phone companies to provide consumers with technology, at no charge, to identify and stop spoofed calls.<sup>5</sup>

We also strongly support H.R. 2298, the ROBOCOP Act, which would clarify that protections against robocalling also cover robo-texting, and would require phone companies to offer to consumers free tools to identify and block all unwanted robocalls and robo-texts.<sup>6</sup>

We also support H.R. 1421, the HANGUP Act, to remove the exemption added to the Telephone Consumer Protection Act in 2015 that allows robocalling without consent by private debt collectors when they are collecting debts under contract with the federal government.<sup>7</sup>

Consumers strongly support these reforms. In recent months, Consumer Reports has gathered nearly 200,000 signatures on our petition calling on the FCC to require phone companies to implement caller ID authentication as soon as possible. Consumer Reports assisted over 30,000 consumers in submitting comments to the FCC this summer, urging them to issue strong rules to protect consumers from unwanted robocalls. Recently, Consumer Reports has also helped consumers send over 260,000 messages to Congress, asking for strong anti-robocalls legislation.

We look forward to working with you to see these important consumer protections enacted into law.

Sincerely,

Maureen Mahoney  
Policy Analyst  
San Francisco, CA

George P. Slover  
Senior Policy Counsel  
Washington, DC

cc: Members, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

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<sup>5</sup> H.R. 946 (2019).

<sup>6</sup> H.R. 2298 (2019).

<sup>7</sup> H.R. 1421 (2019).