

# Consumer groups praise overwhelming House passage of strong anti-robocalls bill

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### CONTACTS:

National Consumer Law Center: Jan Kruse, [jkruse@nclc.org](mailto:jkruse@nclc.org) or (617) 542-8010

Consumer Reports: David Butler, [dbutler@consumer.org](mailto:dbutler@consumer.org) or (202) 462-6262

Download letter from 80 organizations across the nation sent to House Members urging passage of H.R. 3375: <http://bit.ly/stop-bad-robocalls>

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The U.S. House of Representatives struck a strong bipartisan blow against robocalls plaguing consumers today with a near-unanimous 429 - 3 vote to pass H.R. 3375, the Stopping Bad Robocalls Act. The bill takes major steps to curb abusive robocalling by adopting important new consumer protections including:

- Requiring clear FCC regulations to better ensure that automated calls and texts cannot be made without the consumer's prior consent, by directing it to clarify coverage of all technologies that enable them, to clarify consumers' right to withdraw consent, and to close off avenues for robocallers to evade these restrictions.
- Requiring phone companies to provide effective call authentication capability, at no charge to consumers, to better identify and stop robocalling and texting that uses deceptively "spoofed" phone numbers;
- Strengthening FCC powers to impose forfeiture penalties for intentional violations; and
- Requiring creation of a database that robocallers can check in order to avoid making robocalls and texts to a telephone number that has been reassigned to a different consumer who has not given consent.

H.R. 3375 was introduced jointly by Rep. Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR), chair and ranking member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, and Rep. Mike Doyle (D-PA) and Rep. Bob Latta (R-OH), chair and ranking member of the Committee's communications subcommittee. It builds on legislation passed earlier this year by the Senate. More than 80 organizations, representing consumers across the nation, signed a letter to House Members urging their support.

"The House is sending a strong message that it is time to stop the abuse from robocalls," **said Maureen Mahoney, policy analyst for Consumer Reports.** "This bill would go a long way toward protecting people from the daily harassment of unwanted robocalls. These calls aren't just annoying. Shady businesses and individuals are using them to steal your money and your personal information. With today's House vote, we now look forward to seeing the strongest possible bill enacted into law."

"This bill will stop most, if not all, unwanted robocalls," **said Margot Saunders, senior counsel at the National Consumer Law Center.** "It will force telemarketers, scammers, and debt collectors who harass us with these unwanted calls to ensure they have our consent for their automated calls."

And if robocallers continue to call us when we say stop, the pending legislation will hold them accountable for violating the law. It's now time to re-engage with the Senate so we can get a strong final bill sent to the President."

Last year, Americans received nearly 48 billion robocalls, according to YouMail, a private robocall blocking service, with 29 billion this year already as of this June. Many of these calls are made by debt collectors — in June 2019, they accounted for all of the top 20 sources of robocalls. But scam callers are an increasing problem. By one estimate, consumers lost \$10.5 billion to phone scams in one single year.

Robocalls surged further 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 ban on autodialed calls to cell phones without the called party's consent.

*Consumer Reports'* recent cover story "Mad About Robocalls?" offers an in-depth look at how the robocalls problem has reached such an epidemic level. It features a nationally representative CR survey finding that 70 percent of U.S. consumers have stopped answering their phones if they don't recognize the number, or if the caller's number is anonymous. Sixty-two percent said they let most calls go to voicemail, and 53 percent said they have educated family members about potential threats and scams from robocalls and how to protect themselves.