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Cell Phone Robocalls Ignite Debate in Congress

Proposed federal legislation may [expand robocalling](#) to cell phones, escalating a debate between supportive lobbyists and opposed consumer groups.

The “[Mobile Informational Call Act](#),” sponsored by U.S. Rep. Lee Terry (R-Neb.), intends to revoke the 1991 Telephone Consumer Protection Act prohibition on automated calls to cellular devices.

Lee maintains, “This bill’s intent is to never allow an unsolicited, unwanted call,” stating it simply, “reflects the reality of the day.”

His supporters include the American Bankers Association, Association of Credit and Collection Professionals and other institutions that say robocalling would help them remind customers of appointments and alert them about cancellations.

But the National Association of Consumer Advocates, Consumer Watchdog and Consumer Federation of America and other interest groups warn the bill is a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.”

“The real purpose of (the bill) is to open up everyone’s cell phones, land lines, and business phone numbers, without their consent, to a flood of commercial, marketing and debt collection calls,” opponents wrote to Congress.

The battle between the two sides will likely rage on until the House votes on the bill, which stands to impact wireless customers on prepaid calling and tiered data plans.

Prepaid customers are in much the same boat today as were landline owners in the early 1990’s who paid per call, prompting the 1991 TCPA bill to protect them from undue charges. Should the robocalling bill pass, prepaid customers may feel the pinch.

Also, Verizon, AT&T and T-Mobile have all adopted tiered data plans in an effort to save spectrum as smartphones become ever hungrier for bandwidth. Those on newly restricted plans are doing all they can to save money, including [using services like Skype](#) for voice calls. Robocalling, therefore, may cut into their data allowances and result in higher-than-expected bills at the end of the month.

This [post](#) originally appeared at [Mobiledia](#).

On the other hand, proponents say the 1991 bill restricts doctors offices from using automated calls to contact patients and stops schools from alerting parents via robocalls of snow days, for example.

Congress will likely hear more from both sides of this debate since the decision will affect most Americans, considering the nation boasts [327 million network connections](#) to its 312 million people.

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Folks: Exercise your democratic rights: If you don’t want to receive robocalls on your cellphones you can send Congress a petition by visiting this site: <http://pol.moveon.org/norobocalls/>

This issue is an example of *class warfare* at work. Big business (corporate capital) hires high-priced lobbyists to push through legislation that is not in the interest of the majority of the public. On the others side, consumer protection groups and concerned citizens attempt to block this effort by Big Business to degrade the quality of our lives. (You can guess who usually—but not always—wins in such encounters.)