

What to Do About Those Pesky Unwanted Calls

Posted on Dec 07, Posted by [Kathleen Vinehout, State Senator 31st District](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



Sen. Kathleen Vinehout writes about the latest phone scam effecting people across the state and provides information about where people can turn if they received such a call and how to register their phones for the Do Not Call List.

ALMA, WI - “I’ve been getting a lot of calls from blocked and private numbers,” Pat from rural Hixton told me. “We called the phone company and asked them to stop those calls, but I’m not sure what else we can do”. Pat told me many of the calls asked her to change her credit cards to a “better deal”.

Pat couldn’t remember the last time she signed up for Wisconsin’s No Call List. “It was a while ago,” she said.

The No Call List protects people from unwanted calls and texts. Frequently these calls come from telemarketing companies. Sometimes the calls are scammers trying to collect personal information to take advantage of the unwary.

Wisconsin’s Bureau of Consumer Protections staff work to protect people from unwanted calls, enforce laws and alert unsuspecting citizens to scams. The Bureau is housed in the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Getting all your phone numbers – including the cell phones of teens and college students – helps cut down on fraud and criminal activity. For those who use the Internet to make calls – called VoIP – you can also protect those numbers.

Big changes came to the No Call List last summer. My legislative colleagues and I passed a law to use the federal Do Not Call List as of August 2014. The big change is that once your phone number is registered, it is permanently on the federal Do Not Call List.

Before this legislative change, phone numbers registered with Wisconsin's No Call List had to be renewed every two years. As I told Pat, two years goes by fast.

If your numbers were not on the No Call List last summer, the numbers are probably not on the federal Do Not Call List now. If you've gotten a new number in the past year and a half, you definitely need to sign up now.

Getting your numbers protected is easy. You can do this on-line at <https://www.donotcall.gov> or call 1-888-382-1222 (TTY: 1-866-290-4236). Be sure to call from the number you want to protect.

You can check to make sure your phone numbers are registered by using the previously mentioned toll-free number or this link: <https://www.donotcall.gov/confirm/conf.aspx>.

Once your number is registered, telemarketers have 31 days to update their lists. If you receive an unwanted call after 31 days, you should file a complaint at the following link: <https://mydatcp.wi.gov/Complaints/complaint/create/1443c589-da19-e511-af89-0050568c06ae>

Several details of Pat's story made me suspicious. For one, it is illegal in Wisconsin to use a blocked number for a telephone marketing call. It is also illegal to not disclose the number from which the telemarketer is calling. You can find more details about the rules at this link: <http://datcp.wi.gov/uploads/Consumer/pdf/NoCall-TelemarketerFAQ287.pdf>

Recently I received a call from a constituent who received intimidating calls from a person who said he was from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). After research, we discovered the IRS does not notify people of problems by phone. They will contact individuals in the form of an

official letter. The IRS will only use the phone to address problems if you agree.

When I checked on credit card phone scams, I learned voice mailboxes across the country were being flooded with offers to lower interest rates. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) investigates credit card scams. Officials warn people who get robocalls offering lower interest rates to listen to the calls with “extreme skepticism” and delete the calls. The callers will charge a fee to find a lower interest rate, which is something you can do for free.

Be suspicious of any prerecorded call selling something. If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is. And remember, if you are on the Do Not Call List it's illegal for a company to solicit your business through a robocall.

Remind your friends and family they should not provide personal or financial information over the phone.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of a credit card scam, report the incident. You can report all kinds of scams – including telemarketing, credit card, Internet shopping at 1-877-FTC-HELP (1-877-382-4357 or <https://ftccomplaintassistant.gov/#crnt&panel1-1> .

A little bit of skepticism goes a long way to protect ourselves. Enjoy the Holiday Season and be safe!

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