

U.S. SENATOR BOB CASEY



RANKING MEMBER *Special Committee on Aging*

Sen. Casey's Opening Statement Hearing on Efforts to Combat Robocalls October 04, 2017

“Chairman Collins, thank you very much for calling this hearing today. The issue of robocalls is personal to most of us in this room. In fact, just recently, a con artist—likely using robocalling technology—contacted my wife demanding money. She knew to hang up the phone and of course she reported it to one of the Aging Committee’s Fraud Hotline operators: that would be me.

“But, that is not atypical. All across the country, all too often, unsuspecting individuals fall victim to these same con artists. Worse yet, we know that certain types of scams may target older adults specifically or may have a disproportionate impact on them. At our February hearing on scams, we heard about 80-year-old Arlene from Montgomery County, Pennsylvania who was scammed out of more than \$800,000 through calls she received, claiming that she won an international lottery.

“We all have a sacred responsibility to do more to ensure that con artists do not scam our loved ones out of one more penny of their nest eggs.

“That is going to take a continued commitment at the Federal, State, and local levels, and among the telecommunications industry. For example, the Senate recently passed the Elder Abuse Prevention Act. This bill provide law enforcement officials with the tools to prosecute con artists and bring perpetrators to justice. And the House just passed this bill yesterday.

“The FCC has proposed a rule that will help to deter con artists from disguising themselves as a government agency or local business in an effort to entice someone to answer the phone. Thieves should not be able to spoof the phone numbers that all of us know and answer every day. It has been eight months since the rule was proposed by the FCC. This rule should be finalized and implemented immediately.

“And, education and awareness is key. I spent the month of August visiting 32 counties in Pennsylvania and had the chance to visit with many older Pennsylvanians. We discussed issues that ranged from Medicare to Meals on Wheels. But, when I spoke about the Committee’s work on frauds and scams, I asked folks in the audience to raise their hand if they had ever been contacted by a con artist. Nearly every hand in the room went up. Keeping people informed of these scams and the latest methods of con artists goes a long way to preventing seniors from ever falling victim.

“We have a lot of complicated issues to tackle here in Congress, but this is not one of them. To the scammers out there I say this: Your time is up. You will not steal one more penny from seniors without suffering the consequences.

“I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about what more we can be doing collectively to ensure that older Americans do not lose one more penny to thieves falsely claiming to be the IRS or a grandchild in need of rescuing.

“On a logistical note, I would like to thank the Chairman for starting the hearing 30 minutes early this morning. As she knows, the Finance Committee is marking up a bill that will extend funding for the Children’s Health Insurance Program, which expired over the weekend and must be reauthorized in order to ensure that millions of young children are not without coverage.

“In order to express my support for that program, I will be leaving the hearing briefly, but will return before we conclude. Chairman Collins, thank you for agreeing to do this hearing so early. It’s an early start for us here in the committee. Thank you.”

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