



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 416
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
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**Contact: Debbie Poire
(573) 751-8793**

Restricting Automated Phone Calls

JEFFERSON CITY – Last fall, Missouri voters were bombarded by prerecorded phone calls from people like Senator Hillary Clinton and former New York Mayor Rudi Giuliani, urging them to vote for a particular candidate or to vote for or against some ballot issue. These “robo-calls” often came in spurts during the dinner hour, interrupting family gatherings and annoying citizens.

Missouri’s No-Call law allows residents to reduce unwanted telemarketing calls made to their homes by signing up for the No-Call List, managed by the Attorney General’s office. More than 2.4-million Missouri phone lines are registered with the No-Call List.

In response to the flood of automated political calls during the last election cycle, lawmakers have filed more than a dozen bills to add automated phone calls to the No-Call List. I filed Senate Bill 165 to expand the state No-Call List, but since the measure is similar to several other bills filed this session, it likely will be combined in committee with other bills before the final version reaches the Senate floor.

Many of the bills would allow automated calls if a person has given his permission to receive them, if the calls are related to a recent or current business or personal relationship, or if the calls are preceded by a live person who obtains permission to play the recorded message. I also think companies that make automated phone calls should not be able to block their number from appearing on caller identification services.

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Six states already have restricted or banned automated political phone calls, while Illinois now requires callers to disclose who they work for. Federal courts have upheld the constitutionality of restricting automated political calls in Minnesota and Indiana.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us.

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.