



Senate Panel Considers Sen. Scott T. Rupp's Bill to Expand No-Call List, Require 'Paid for by' Statement on Political Calls

JEFFERSON CITY — A Senate panel today (2/3) is reviewing a bill proposed by Senator Scott T. Rupp, R-Wentzville, that would add cell phone numbers to the state no-call list, prohibit automated calls to anyone on the no-call list, and require a “paid for by” statement on political phone calls.

Senate Bill 65 — first introduced by Sen. Rupp in 2008 — is under consideration by the Senate Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy and the Environment Committee.

Senator Rupp's proposed bill would add automated calls to home and cell phone numbers to the state's no-call list and would require anyone making a political call to a Missouri resident to include a “paid for by” statement and to register with the Missouri Ethics Commission.

“Consumers should have the option of preventing these types of calls from reaching their home or cell phones,” Sen. Rupp said. “And while phone calls about polls on public policy matters, issues that affect Missouri voters, and messages from political groups are allowed by state law, there must be more accountability and transparency in order to eliminate the misrepresentation that often occurs.”

Under Sen. Rupp's proposals, businesses and other non-committee organizations making political calls would be required to register with the Secretary of State's office and the Missouri Ethics Commission and to disclose on whose behalf they are making phone calls. Organizations that give out the phone number of an elected official in a political radio advertisement would also be required to register with the Missouri Ethics Commission and to disclose who is paying for the advertisement. The proposed bill would also require organizations to keep records of payments for political solicitations for up to two years.

In addition, Sen. Rupp's bill would prevent anyone making solicitation or automated calls from blocking their number from appearing on any caller identification service. Under the bill's provisions, any faxes, graphic imaging or data communication (which includes text messaging) associated with solicitation calls would also be banned under the no-call list.

Another component of the proposed legislation would allow individuals who receive more than one automated phone call or political solicitation over a 12-month period from the same entity — an entity that is in violation of the no-call list or caller identification — to bring legal action, with a proposed two-year statute of limitations. Any violations of the no-call list would be subject to civil penalties up to \$5,000 per violation, and any violations of political-related solicitations would be referred to the Missouri Ethics Commission.

-more-

“The goal of expanding the state’s no-call list and making sure political phone calls are tied to their rightful sponsors is simple and clear: to protect Missouri consumers’ rights and privacy,” Sen. Rupp said. “Given last year’s election cycle and the growing outcry of Missouri consumers who want these calls stopped, I am hopeful the committee will give quick approval to the bill and send it to the Senate floor for debate.”

###