



Telemarketing Fraud: Putting Phone Scams on Hold; Hearing Before the Committee on Small Business, House of Representatives, One Hundred Third ... DC, September 28, 1994 (Classic Reprint)

United States. Congress. House. Committee On Small Business

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House of Representatives, Committee on Small Business, Washington, DC. The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:20 a.m., in room 2359-A, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. John J. LaFalce (chairman of the committee) presiding. Chairman LaFalce. The Small Business Committee will come to order. Our committee meets this morning to address telemarketing fraud, a problem of growing national importance both for American consumers and for the business community. At one time or another, most of us have been exposed to a sales pitch that was too good to be true, a sweepstakes in which we are proclaimed to have already won, or a free offer that we later learn contains more than a few catches and conditions. Perhaps because we are all familiar with these types of offers and deals, we assume that telemarketing fraud is an occasional annoyance, a minor event in the modern world of sales and marketing. Unfortunately, that is not the case. We are witnessing a new generation of telemarketing fraud, a landscape of high-tech boiler rooms and computerized phone lists of vulnerable victims. All told, these scam artists took in an estimated \$10 billion from consumers in 1993. The total figure may be four times higher than that, as high as \$40 billion, because so much of this fraud goes unreported. Welcome to a world where threats and harassment are common sales tactics, where profits are high but prizes are nonexistent. According to an award-winning series of articles that appeared last year in the Buffalo News, one telemarketing firm took in \$40,000 per week and paid its workers as much as \$250,000 per year. Another sweepstakes firm grossed \$11 million per year, but gave away only one car as a prize during that time. In Iowa, a single senior citizen recently lost \$167,000 to the tele sharks. Today's hearing will focus on both the fraud against small business and on the effects of telemarketing fraud on the elderly. (Typographical errors above are due to OCR software and don't occur in the book.)

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