

# ILLEGAL ROBOCALLS TOP CONSUMER COMPLAINT IN 2017

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BISMARCK, ND – One in four consumer complaints in 2017 was about an illegal robocall, announced Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem.

“Based on comments I hear daily from North Dakotans, and my own experience, it’s easy to see why these robocalls are the top complaint. The calls are annoying and most often are nothing but scams that have cost consumers money. Plus, they are illegal in North Dakota,” said Stenehjem. “I have no doubt that the number of complaints filed represents only a small fraction of citizens who find robocalls out of control. The Federal Trade Commission reported receiving 375,000 complaints a month in 2017,” he continued.

The consumer protection division received 1,125 consumer complaints in 2017. The top five complaint categories:

1. Do Not Call/Robocall = 279
2. Imposter Scams (grandparent, romance, IRS scam, sweepstakes, etc.) = 119
3. Contractor/Home Improvement = 88
4. Debt Adjustment/Settlement, Credit Counseling = 75
5. Identity Theft = 53

The remaining consumer complaints covered more than two dozen categories from advertising to warranties.

Last year, Stenehjem joined a bipartisan group of Attorneys General to [urge the FCC to adopt new rules](/sites/ag/files/documents/AG-RobocallComments.pdf) (</sites/ag/files/documents/AG-RobocallComments.pdf>) to help address the robocall and spoofing problem. Spoofing occurs when a caller falsifies the information transmitted to a caller ID display in order to hide their identity. The FCC responded with rules that allow telephone providers to block calls that come from invalid numbers and numbers that have not been assigned to anyone.

“This change, together with consumers demanding their carriers use new technology to do a better job of blocking intrusive robocalls, should help alleviate the nuisance in the long term,” Stenehjem said. He urged North Dakotans to press their telephone service providers to offer robocall-blocking technology.

Parrell Grossman, director of the consumer protection division, said consumers should heed the advice of the FCC:

1. You may not be able to tell right away if an incoming call is spoofed. Be careful about responding to any request for personal identifying information.
2. Never give out personal information, such as account numbers, passwords, mother’s maiden name, in response to unexpected calls.