

## ***Consumer Relief is On the Way***

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Last week I joined Governor Mark Warner and other elected officials and business representatives at America Online's headquarters at Dulles for the signing of Virginia's tough new anti-spam bill. Under the new law, those responsible for sending the worst, most egregious and fraudulent kinds of spam can now face criminal prosecution resulting in jail time, asset forfeiture, and fines.

While the bill was supported heavily by AOL, its provisions are available to all Internet service providers. The new law amends an existing code section that I and others got passed in 1999 establishing civil and monetary penalties for spamming. Activities that can trigger criminal action under the new law include forging email header and routing information, sending huge volumes of bulk emails, generating substantial monetary proceeds from spamming, and employing a minor to be an affiliate in the spamming process.

AOL blocks up to 1.9 billion spam emails every day, and other ISP's are blocking spam as well. Even with the new law and the enforcement that will result, it is important that consumers delete spam rather than opening it and report the spam to their ISP.

And on another major irritant – telemarketing – relief may also be on the way. The General Assembly delayed passage of a "Do Not Call" bill I introduced the past two legislative sessions in anticipation of the U.S. Congress taking action. Under my proposed bill and under the federal law signed recently by the President, consumers may register with a federal list indicating that they do not wish to be called by telemarketers. The telemarketers as a requirement of the new law must abide by the consumers' requests and not call them.

Getting rid of the unwanted, dinner-time calls and the dead-air calls will be a great relief. The new federal law is effective July 1, 2003, with the Do Not Call list expected to be implemented after that time.

One of my first activities in public life was to serve on the Fairfax County Consumer Protection Commission. That group continues to do good work. And I am pleased to continue to be a part of providing some much-needed relief to consumers. Share your ideas with me at [kenplum@aol.com](mailto:kenplum@aol.com) as to what else can be done to protect you as a consumer.