

House moves to stop scams using false caller IDs

April 14 2010, By JIM ABRAMS , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Using false caller ID with the intent of tricking people into revealing personal information or otherwise causing harm would become illegal under legislation that passed the House Wednesday.

Backers of the bill, passed by voice vote, said [caller ID](#) "spoofing" is a growing threat to people because of new technology making it cheap and easy to change the name and number that phone call recipients see on their caller ID.

For example, a scammer might use the caller ID of a bank as a way of duping a person into revealing his Social Security, bank account or [credit card numbers](#).

Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., the chief sponsor of the bill with Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, cited a case last year where New York City police uncovered an identity theft ring that used caller ID spoofing to steal more than \$15 million from 6,000 victims.

In another case, he said, a woman used the caller ID of a pharmacist to trick a romantic rival into taking a drug used to cause abortions.

Engel and others speaking on the legislation also raised an issue that strikes closer to home - the use of spoofing during political campaigns to mislead voters or get voters angry at a candidate they mistakenly think is calling them, perhaps in the middle of the night.

The legislation would only outlaw the use of spoofing technology when the intent is to deceive and harm the recipient of the call. Legitimate uses of the technology, such as a domestic abuse shelter changing its number to protect an occupant of the shelter, would still be permitted.

The measure gives the [Federal Communications Commission](#) authority to develop regulations to enforce the new law. Violators could be subject to \$10,000 in fines and up to a year in prison.

The House has passed similar legislation in the past two sessions of Congress. It awaits action in the Senate, where Sen. Bill Nelson, D-Fla., has introduced a companion measure.

The bill is H.R. 1258.

On the Net: Congress: <http://thomas.loc.gov>

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