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MADIGAN, ATTORNEYS GENERAL NATIONWIDE FIGHT AGAINST ROBO-CALLS TO CELL PHONES***Attorneys General Oppose Federal Bill That Would Erode Right to Cell Phone Privacy***

Chicago — Joined by her state counterparts from across the country, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today called on Congress to oppose legislation that would allow for robo-calls to cell phones. Madigan said the “Mobile Informational Call Act of 2011” would force consumers to pay for the unwanted calls.

Known as H.R. 3035, the federal legislation would amend the Communications Act of 1934 to allow third parties, such as debt collectors or other businesses, to place automated “informational” calls to cell phones, impacting those who pay by the minute or have a limited number of minutes.

“This legislation would open the floodgates for telemarketers to annoy us with robo-calls to our cell phones at all hours of the day while forcing us to foot the bill,” Madigan said. “It’s essentially a way for businesses to shift their advertising and marketing costs on to consumers.”

Currently, federal law allows robo-calls to be placed to people who have given their explicit consent to receive them or in case of an emergency. Under the proposed federal bill, businesses would be allowed to robo-call any consumer who has provided their telephone number in the course of a transaction – regardless if a consumer asks not to be contacted.

Madigan and 53 other attorneys general sent a letter to members of Congress today urging lawmakers to reject the proposal. Madigan said consumers could get stuck paying for robo-calls to their cell phones even if a business has the wrong contact information.

The letter pointed to the proposal’s potential for distracting callers who may receive calls while driving. A 2009 study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that cell phone use was involved in 995 or 18 percent of fatalities in distraction-related crashes.

Madigan joined attorneys general from Indiana and North Dakota to co-sponsor the letter to Congress. Signing onto the letter were attorneys general from: Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virgin Islands, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

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