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CONSUMERS CAN LIMIT TELEMARKETING CALLS

Form to be mailed with October Phone Bill

ATLANTA -- Consumers who wish to limit telemarketing calls will be able to place themselves on a "No Call List" starting in October. For a \$5.00 charge, consumers are placed on a list which telemarketers are banned from calling effective January 1, 1999. Consumers can look for the forms in their October phone bills.

People who register on the list can still expect to get some calls as House Bill 71 does not apply to companies who have a current or previous relationship with the customer, political pollsters and candidates for public offices, religious or charity groups.

The state Public Service Commission, charged with implementing the program, is privatizing the service in an effort to maximize the number of people who register.

Telemarketers that call someone on the list after failing to check their list against the "No Call List" can be subjected to a \$2,000 fine per call.

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CONSUMERS GIVEN MORE POWER TO COMBAT PHONE SLAMMING

The General Assembly passed legislation imposing tougher penalties against telephone companies that switch consumers local and long distance phone services without their consent - the practice known as "slamming." Slamming complaints at the PSC have escalated from nearly 200 in 1995 to nearly 2000 last year.

Under provisions of H.B.1130, telephone companies are given ninety days to resolve a consumer's slamming complaint. If the offending company has not issued a refund entitled to the consumer within that ninety day period, consumers can sue the company in their local courts for up to three times the amount the consumer lost in rate differences. Additionally, telephone companies can now be fined up to \$15,000 per slamming violation.

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