

070170248

HOUSE BILL NO. 2561

Offered January 10, 2007

Prefiled January 10, 2007

A BILL to amend and reenact § 59.1-200 of the Code of Virginia, to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 59.1 a chapter numbered 44.1, consisting of sections numbered 59.1-518.1 through 59.1-518.7, and to repeal § 18.2-425.1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the regulation of automatic dialing-announcing devices; recorded solicitation calls; penalties.

Patron—Brink

Referred to Committee on Commerce and Labor

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §59.1-200 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Title 59.1 a chapter numbered 44.1, consisting of sections numbered 59.1-518.1 through 59.1-518.7, as follows:

§ 59.1-200. Prohibited practices.

A. The following fraudulent acts or practices committed by a supplier in connection with a consumer transaction are hereby declared unlawful:

1. Misrepresenting goods or services as those of another;
2. Misrepresenting the source, sponsorship, approval, or certification of goods or services;
3. Misrepresenting the affiliation, connection, or association of the supplier, or of the goods or services, with another;
4. Misrepresenting geographic origin in connection with goods or services;
5. Misrepresenting that goods or services have certain quantities, characteristics, ingredients, uses, or benefits;
6. Misrepresenting that goods or services are of a particular standard, quality, grade, style, or model;
7. Advertising or offering for sale goods that are used, secondhand, repossessed, defective, blemished, deteriorated, or reconditioned, or that are "seconds," irregulars, imperfects, or "not first class," without clearly and unequivocally indicating in the advertisement or offer for sale that the goods are used, secondhand, repossessed, defective, blemished, deteriorated, reconditioned, or are "seconds," irregulars, imperfects or "not first class";

8. Advertising goods or services with intent not to sell them as advertised, or with intent not to sell at the price or upon the terms advertised.

In any action brought under this subdivision, the refusal by any person, or any employee, agent, or servant thereof, to sell any goods or services advertised or offered for sale at the price or upon the terms advertised or offered, shall be prima facie evidence of a violation of this subdivision. This paragraph shall not apply when it is clearly and conspicuously stated in the advertisement or offer by which such goods or services are advertised or offered for sale, that the supplier or offeror has a limited quantity or amount of such goods or services for sale, and the supplier or offeror at the time of such advertisement or offer did in fact have or reasonably expected to have at least such quantity or amount for sale;

9. Making false or misleading statements of fact concerning the reasons for, existence of, or amounts of price reductions;

10. Misrepresenting that repairs, alterations, modifications, or services have been performed or parts installed;

11. Misrepresenting by the use of any written or documentary material that appears to be an invoice or bill for merchandise or services previously ordered;

12. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, using in any manner the words "wholesale," "wholesaler," "factory," or "manufacturer" in the supplier's name, or to describe the nature of the supplier's business, unless the supplier is actually engaged primarily in selling at wholesale or in manufacturing the goods or services advertised or offered for sale;

13. Using in any contract or lease any liquidated damage clause, penalty clause, or waiver of defense, or attempting to collect any liquidated damages or penalties under any clause, waiver, damages, or penalties that are void or unenforceable under any otherwise applicable laws of the Commonwealth, or under federal statutes or regulations;

14. Using any other deception, fraud, false pretense, false promise, or misrepresentation in connection with a consumer transaction;

15. Violating any provision of § 3.1-796.78, 3.1-796.79, or 3.1-796.82, relating to the sale of certain animals by pet dealers which is described in such sections, is a violation of this chapter;

INTRODUCED

HB2561

59 16. Failing to disclose all conditions, charges, or fees relating to:

60 a. The return of goods for refund, exchange, or credit. Such disclosure shall be by means of a sign
61 attached to the goods, or placed in a conspicuous public area of the premises of the supplier, so as to be
62 readily noticeable and readable by the person obtaining the goods from the supplier. If the supplier does
63 not permit a refund, exchange, or credit for return, he shall so state on a similar sign. The provisions of
64 this subdivision shall not apply to any retail merchant who has a policy of providing, for a period of not
65 less than 20 days after date of purchase, a cash refund or credit to the purchaser's credit card account
66 for the return of defective, unused, or undamaged merchandise upon presentation of proof of purchase.
67 In the case of merchandise paid for by check, the purchase shall be treated as a cash purchase and any
68 refund may be delayed for a period of 10 banking days to allow for the check to clear. This subdivision
69 does not apply to sale merchandise that is obviously distressed, out of date, post season, or otherwise
70 reduced for clearance; nor does this subdivision apply to special order purchases where the purchaser
71 has requested the supplier to order merchandise of a specific or unusual size, color, or brand not
72 ordinarily carried in the store or the store's catalog; nor shall this subdivision apply in connection with a
73 transaction for the sale or lease of motor vehicles, farm tractors, or motorcycles as defined in
74 § 46.2-100;

75 b. A layaway agreement. Such disclosure shall be furnished to the consumer (i) in writing at the time
76 of the layaway agreement, or (ii) by means of a sign placed in a conspicuous public area of the
77 premises of the supplier, so as to be readily noticeable and readable by the consumer, or (iii) on the bill
78 of sale. Disclosure shall include the conditions, charges, or fees in the event that a consumer breaches
79 the agreement;

80 16a. Failing to provide written notice to a consumer of an existing open-end credit balance in excess
81 of \$5 (i) on an account maintained by the supplier and (ii) resulting from such consumer's overpayment
82 on such account. Suppliers shall give consumers written notice of such credit balances within 60 days of
83 receiving overpayments. If the credit balance information is incorporated into statements of account
84 furnished consumers by suppliers within such 60-day period, no separate or additional notice is required;

85 17. If a supplier enters into a written agreement with a consumer to resolve a dispute that arises in
86 connection with a consumer transaction, failing to adhere to the terms and conditions of such an
87 agreement;

88 18. Violating any provision of the Virginia Health Spa Act, Chapter 24 (§ 59.1-294 et seq.) of this
89 title;

90 19. Violating any provision of the Virginia Home Solicitation Sales Act, Chapter 2.1 (§ 59.1-21.1 et
91 seq.) of this title;

92 20. Violating any provision of the Automobile Repair Facilities Act, Chapter 17.1 (§ 59.1-207.1 et
93 seq.) of this title;

94 21. Violating any provision of the Virginia Lease-Purchase Agreement Act, Chapter 17.4
95 (§ 59.1-207.17 et seq.) of this title;

96 22. Violating any provision of the Prizes and Gifts Act, Chapter 31 (§ 59.1-415 et seq.) of this title;

97 23. Violating any provision of the Virginia Public Telephone Information Act, Chapter 32
98 (§ 59.1-424 et seq.) of this title;

99 24. Violating any provision of § 54.1-1505;

100 25. Violating any provision of the Motor Vehicle Manufacturers' Warranty Adjustment Act, Chapter
101 17.6 (§ 59.1-207.34 et seq.) of this title;

102 26. Violating any provision of § 3.1-949.1, relating to the pricing of merchandise;

103 27. Violating any provision of the Pay-Per-Call Services Act, Chapter 33 (§ 59.1-429 et seq.) of this
104 title;

105 28. Violating any provision of the Extended Service Contract Act, Chapter 34 (§ 59.1-435 et seq.) of
106 this title;

107 29. Violating any provision of the Virginia Membership Camping Act, Chapter 25 (§ 59.1-311 et
108 seq.) of this title;

109 30. Violating any provision of the Comparison Price Advertising Act, Chapter 17.7 (§ 59.1-207.40 et
110 seq.) of this title;

111 31. Violating any provision of the Virginia Travel Club Act, Chapter 36 (§ 59.1-445 et seq.) of this
112 title;

113 32. Violating any provision of §§ 46.2-1231 and 46.2-1233.1;

114 33. Violating any provision of Chapter 40 (§ 54.1-4000 et seq.) of Title 54.1;

115 34. Violating any provision of Chapter 10.1 (§ 58.1-1031 et seq.) of Title 58.1;

116 35. Using the consumer's social security number as the consumer's account number with the supplier,
117 if the consumer has requested in writing that the supplier use an alternate number not associated with
118 the consumer's social security number;

119 36. Violating any provision of Chapter 18 (§ 6.1-444 et seq.) of Title 6.1;

120 37. Violating any provision of § 8.01-40.2;

121 38. Violating any provision of Article 7 (§ 32.1-212 et seq.) of Chapter 6 of Title 32.1;
 122 39. Violating any provision of Chapter 34.1 (§ 59.1-441.1 et seq.) of this title;
 123 40. Violating any provision of Chapter 10.2 (§ 6.1-363.2 et seq.) of Title 6.1;
 124 41. Violating any provision of the Virginia Post-Disaster Anti-Price Gouging Act, Chapter 46
 125 (§ 59.1-525 et seq.) of this title;
 126 42. Violating any provision of Chapter 47 (§ 59.1-530 et seq.) of this title;
 127 43. Violating any provision of § 59.1-443.2;
 128 44. Violating any provision of Chapter 48 (§ 59.1-533 et seq.) of this title; and
 129 45. Violating any provision of Chapter 20 (§ 6.1-474 et seq.) of Title 6.1; and
 130 46. Violating any provision of Chapter 44.1 (§ 59.1-518.1 et seq.) of this title.
 131 B. Nothing in this section shall be construed to invalidate or make unenforceable any contract or
 132 lease solely by reason of the failure of such contract or lease to comply with any other law of the
 133 Commonwealth or any federal statute or regulation, to the extent such other law, statute, or regulation
 134 provides that a violation of such law, statute, or regulation shall not invalidate or make unenforceable
 135 such contract or lease.

136 CHAPTER 44.1. 137 AUTOMATIC DIALING-ANNOUNCING DEVICES.

138 § 59.1-518.1. Definition.

139 As used in this chapter:

140 "Automatic dialing-announcing device" means a device that (i) selects and dials telephone numbers;
 141 and (ii) working alone or in conjunction with other equipment, disseminates a prerecorded or
 142 synthesized voice message to the telephone number called.

143 "Caller" means a person that attempts to contact, or contacts, a subscriber in the Commonwealth by
 144 using a telephone or telephone line.

145 "Commercial telephone solicitation" means any unsolicited call to a subscriber when (i) the person
 146 initiating the call has not had a prior business or personal relationship with the subscriber and (ii) the
 147 purpose of the call is to solicit the purchase or the consideration of the purchase of goods or services
 148 by the subscriber. The term does not include calls initiated by the Commonwealth or a political
 149 subdivision for exclusively public purposes.

150 "Subscriber" means (i) a person who has subscribed to telephone service from a telephone company
 151 or (ii) other persons living or residing with the subscribing person.

152 § 59.1-518.2. Use of automatic dialing-announcing devices prohibited.

153 A. A caller may not use an automatic dialing-announcing device to make a telephone call to the
 154 following:

- 155 1. A health care provider as defined in § 32.1-276.3;
- 156 2. A business providing ambulance services as defined in § 38.2-3407.9;
- 157 3. A residential facility as defined in § 15.2-2291;
- 158 4. A law-enforcement agency as defined in § 32.1-48.06;
- 159 5. A fire department or rescue squad; or
- 160 6. A subscriber on the National Do-Not-Call Registry.

161 B. With regard to telephone calls that are not prohibited by subsection A, a caller shall not use, or
 162 connect to a telephone line, an automatic dialing-announcing device unless:

- 163 1. The subscriber has knowingly or voluntarily requested, consented to, permitted, or authorized
 164 receipt of the message; or
- 165 2. The message is immediately preceded by a live operator who obtains the subscriber's consent
 166 before the message is delivered.

167 C. Subsection B does not apply to messages:

- 168 1. From a school board to students, parents, or employees;
- 169 2. To subscribers with whom the caller has a current business or personal relationship; or
- 170 3. Advising employees of work schedules.

171 § 59.1-518.3. Disconnect requirement.

172 A caller shall not use an automatic dialing-announcing device or other device that disseminates a
 173 prerecorded or synthesized voice message to the telephone number called unless the device is designed
 174 and operated to disconnect, disengage, or terminate within five seconds after the party called terminates
 175 the telephone call by any method that is in accordance with normal operating procedures of his
 176 telephone receiver.

177 § 59.1-518.4. Disclosures by live operator preceding message.

178 When a message sent via an automatic dialing-announcing device is immediately preceded by a live
 179 operator, the operator shall, at the outset of the message, disclose the following:

- 180 1. The name of the business, firm, organization, association, partnership, or entity for which the
 181 message is being made;

182 2. *The purpose of the message;*
183 3. *The identity or kinds of goods or services the message is promoting; and*
184 4. *If applicable, the fact that the message intends to solicit payment or the commitment of funds.*
185 § 59.1-518.5. *Calling time restrictions.*
186 A. *A caller shall not use an automatic dialing-announcing device to make a commercial telephone*
187 *solicitation so that a subscriber receives a telephone call before 8:00 a.m. or after 9:00 p.m.*
188 B. *This section does not apply to messages:*
189 1. *From a school board to students, parents, or employees;*
190 2. *To subscribers with whom the caller has a current business or personal relationship; or*
191 3. *Advising employees of work schedules.*
192 § 59.1-518.6. *Violations of chapter; penalty.*
193 *Any violation of the provisions of this chapter shall constitute a prohibited practice pursuant to the*
194 *provisions of § 59.1-200 and shall be subject to any and all of the enforcement provisions of the*
195 *Virginia Consumer Protection Act (§ 59.1-196 et seq.).*
196 § 59.1-518.7. *Liability of certain employees.*
197 *Nothing contained in this chapter shall be construed to permit any civil penalty or other sanction*
198 *authorized pursuant to the Virginia Consumer Protection Act (§ 59.1-196 et seq.) to be assessed against*
199 *any employee or agent who has been caused, directed or authorized by his employer to violate the*
200 *provisions of this chapter. In such cases, the employer shall be subject to any civil penalty or other*
201 *sanction authorized pursuant to the Virginia Consumer Protection Act.*
202 **2. That § 18.2-425.1 of the Code of Virginia is repealed.**