**Nation’s Consumer Utility Advocates Recommend Changes to FCC’s Proposed Telemarketing Rules**

**SILVER SPRING, MD, December 9, 2002** - The federal government should adopt telemarketing rules that would implement a consumer-friendly do-not-call list, restrict telemarketers’ use of automated calling systems, outlaw telemarketers from blocking Caller ID and prohibit telemarketing calls to cellular numbers, the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates (NASUCA) said today in comments filed with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

“Residential consumers deserve to have their right to privacy protected and to be free from annoying and bothersome telephone calls,” said NASUCA President and Ohio Consumers’ Counsel Robert S. Tongren. “NASUCA’s recommendations will provide consumers with considerable benefits and privacy protection against unwanted telemarketers.”

Currently there is no single, free method for consumers to demand that telemarketers not contact them. Consumers must request to be placed on do-not-call lists maintained by several public and private organizations to keep unwanted telemarketers away. Some states offer a do-not-call list, but the process differs widely from state to state. Lists may exempt certain types of businesses, including banks and credit card companies, and some charge a fee for consumers to be added. The Direct Marketing Association also offers a do-not-call registry, but it is distributed only to telemarketers within its membership.

“There seems to be no end to the unwanted telemarketing calls received by families across the country,” said NASUCA Executive Director Charles Acquard. “A consumer-friendly national do-not-call list would go a long way toward giving consumers the resources they need to take back control of their telephone line.”

The FCC has authority over all telemarketers, so a national registry would increase federal enforcement of those companies that continue to call consumers on the list. In a separate proceeding, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is also considering a national do-not-call registry. NASUCA filed recommendations regarding the FTC’s proposed telemarketing rules in April 2002.

NASUCA’s recommendations call for several key enhancements to the proposed rules, including:

* Establishing a comprehensive, consumer-friendly national do-not-call registry, which provides consumers multiple methods - including telephone, Internet and mail - for registering their telephone numbers free of charge. NASUCA urges the FCC and FTC to work cooperatively to develop a single system.
* Prohibiting telemarketers from having the ability to block their company name and telephone number from appearing on consumers’ Caller ID devices.
* Requiring telemarketers who use automated calling systems known as “predictive dialers” to reduce the number of abandoned calls that consumers receive to zero. Predictive dialers randomly call multiple numbers simultaneously. Those calls that cannot be answered by a telemarketer are disconnected, leaving many consumers with dead air when they pick up the telephone.
* Prohibiting telemarketing calls to cellular telephone numbers unless authorized by the consumer.
* Ensuring that a national do-not-call registry supplements existing state laws that offer residents greater protection against telemarketers.

NASUCA’s recommendations can be viewed at [www.nasuca.org](http://www.nasuca.org/).