

What We Know

ARTICLES & INSIGHTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



[Hannah Kays](#) is an associate in the firm's [Creditors' Rights and Collections](#) practice group, representing a broad range of businesses in North and South Carolina through all stages of the collection litigation process, including pre-suit collection efforts, lawsuits, judgments, and executions. Before joining Smith Debnam, Hannah represented clients in the areas of personal injury workers' compensation, social security disability, and mass torts. She earned both her BA in Political Science as well as her JD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She also received a Masters of Law degree in International Business Law from Radboud University in the Netherlands.

Government Shutdown Leaves Consumers Vulnerable

January 15, 2019 | by

The U.S. is undergoing the longest government shutdown in the nation's history, and it is taking a toll on the consumer's economic welfare in more ways than one.

Every day, Americans fall victim to harassing telemarketing robocalls and online fraudsters and scam artists.

However, due to the government shutdown, key websites run by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) are out of service, leaving consumers more vulnerable than ever. In fact, both the FTC website and the FCC website state **they are closed due to lapse in government funding**.

The "Do Not Call" Registry is Out of Service:

Americans harassed with incessant telephone ringing from robocalls will have no choice but to endure the assault while the government shutdown is ongoing. The FTC protects consumers by maintaining the "Do Not Call" Registry website and helping consumers with identity theft and scams.

The National "Do Not Call" registry cuts down the number of unwanted robocalls and provides a way for people to report specific phone numbers that may be calling them illegally. The "Do Not Call" Registry allows both consumers to add their numbers to the list and telemarketers to see who they are not allowed to contact.

The FCC and FTC also release weekly data and share alerts of trending scams to third-party robocall blocking services, which help these third-party services update their products to protect consumers from further harassment.

What this means. It remains to be seen if the government shutdown results in an uptick in illegal calls. Nonetheless, consumers are left with few options to defend against a tidal wave of unwanted robocalls coming from scam artists, debt collectors, and telemarketers at all hours of the day. Conversely, it may also cause an innocent caller, such as a well-meaning debt collector, to inadvertently telephone a consumer that has

been placed on the "Do Not Call" registry.

The Identity Theft Reporting Portals are out of Service:

Another key website, www.identitytheft.gov, is out of service because no one is around to administer this protection. Due to the shutdown, consumers are unable to file a report or retrieve the paperwork they need to prove to banks and creditors that someone stole their identity. The website is also supposed to provide victims with an identity theft recovery plan.

The consumer complaint portal on the FCC and the FTC websites are also meant to be a potential starting point for federal investigations against scammers and fraudsters. The FCC and the FTC utilize the information collected to support criminal investigation and prosecution of identity theft by servicing as a clearinghouse for identity theft complaints.

What this means: Individuals should remain extra vigilant against robocalls and potential scam artists during this government shutdown. Before the government shutdown, the FCC had handed down several multimillion-dollar fines against the worst offenders and pressured telecom giants to implement higher and newer technical standards to protect consumers from unwanted calls. With the partial shutdown, the FCC and the FTC are handicapped from providing support in criminal investigations and prosecutions of identity theft, leaving consumers extremely vulnerable during this time.

CONTACT US

919.250.2000
mail@smithdebnamlaw.com

RALEIGH OFFICE

The Landmark Center
4601 Six Forks Road, Suite 400
Raleigh, North Carolina 27609

Phone: 919.250.2000
Fax: 919.250.2100

COLUMBIA OFFICE

1720 Main St.,
Suite 104
Columbia, SC 29201

Phone: 864.751.5523
Fax: 888.784.2250