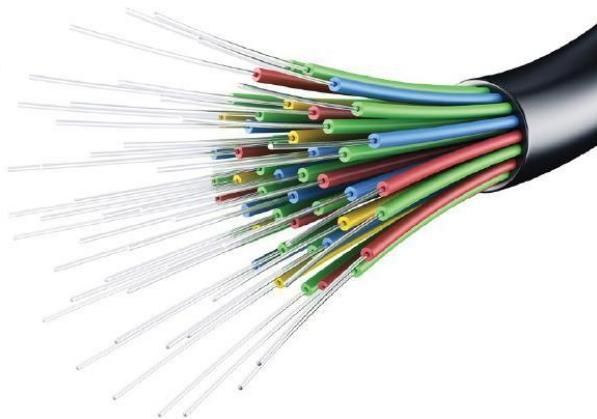


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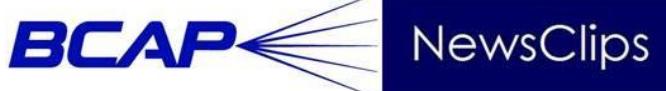
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The fight against maddening, illegal robocalls just got easier.

Effective June 30, big phone providers nationwide — such as AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile and Comcast — must use caller ID verification technology to confirm that calls are really being made from the number being displayed. That should stop con artists from “spoofing” phone numbers to trick people into answering a robocall. “June 30 is an important day in consumer protection history. The FCC action to thwart robocalls will rank up there with laws guaranteeing consumer access to their credit reports and eliminating abusive credit card practices,” said Teresa Murray, consumer watchdog with the U.S. PIRG Education Fund. “Thousands of people fall for scams each year that start with an illegal robocall and spoofed phone number. An elderly man in Cleveland lost \$124,000 last month to a robocaller impersonating Amazon,” she said. “These kinds of cons happen every day.”

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The Hill
[Bipartisan antitrust leaders urge FTC to pursue Facebook case](#)

Washington Post
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Reuters
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Philadelphia Inquirer
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Harrisburg Patriot-News
[Sen. Mastriano, Trump ally, works to build support for Pa. audit of 2020 election](#)

The scourge of unwanted calls has gotten so bad that many people have stopped answering the phone if they don't recognize the number. That's where spoofing comes in. Scammers can make it look like the call is coming from the IRS, a bank or a neighbor — lending legitimacy to the call and making it more likely it will be answered. Some people have even reported getting calls from what looks to be their own phone numbers.

Spoofed calls also are harder to trace. The Federal Communications Commission is now requiring big providers to use STIR/SHAKEN technology to verify that the caller ID information transmitted with a call matches the caller's real phone number. The technology makes it easier for phone companies to block illegal robocalls or label them as likely spam. Smaller phone companies with 100,000 or fewer subscriber lines were granted an extension until June 2023, but the FCC is formally considering shortening the extension.

Not all robocalls are illegal. Informational calls are allowed — such as from schools alerting families to snow days or pharmacies telling customers their prescriptions are ready. Robocalls from debt collectors, politicians, survey takers and most charities also are allowed. But because robocalls are so cheap, they are a favorite of scammers.

Approximately 26.3 billion robocalls were placed nationwide during the first six months this year, according to YouMail, a call-managing service based in Irvine, Calif. "While there is no silver bullet ... STIR/SHAKEN will turbo-charge many of the tools we use in our fight against robocalls: from consumer apps and network-level blocking, to enforcement investigations and shutting down the gateways used by international robocall campaigns," acting FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel said in a statement last week. "This is a good day for American consumers who, like all of us, are sick and tired of illegal spoofed robocalls." Added Ms. Murray: "When our phone rings, we should be able to trust the caller ID on the display. That day is coming back. – **Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**

Voter ID has again taken center stage in Pennsylvania.

Republicans are pushing stricter voting rules against the objections of Democrats, led by Gov. Tom Wolf, who last week [vetoed an election overhaul](#) that, among other major changes, would have [required that all voters show identification at the polls](#). Republicans are now turning their focus to a constitutional amendment that would go straight to voters for approval. But understanding the effects of voter ID laws is complicated. While the political debate often devolves into shouting matches about security and suppression, research into ID requirements has yielded a contradictory array of results.

We waded through the research and interviewed experts to make sense of it. Voter ID laws potentially have small negative effects on net turnout — but the research is muddy, allowing politicians to cherry-pick data or

make broad generalizations. Plus, some experts said, turnout might not be an appropriate way to think about something as fundamental as voting rights. Here are some key things to know about voter ID.

– Voter ID is meant to prevent fraud that doesn't exist: The justification for tightening voter ID rules is to prevent fraud. But significant voter fraud, especially voter impersonation, is virtually nonexistent. "We have tremendous evidence that voter ID laws do absolutely nothing to prevent voter fraud, because there is no systematic voter fraud to prevent," said Bernard Fraga, an Emory University political scientist. State Rep. Seth Grove (R., York), who authored the bill Wolf vetoed, has even acknowledged the ID rules don't address an existing problem. "It's not to say that there has been any" fraud, he told *The Inquirer*, describing the current rules as "a loophole that can be exploited" in the future.

– 'Voter ID' means many things: Small differences in law and implementation can matter a lot. The 2012 Pennsylvania voter ID law that courts struck down was one of the strictest in the nation. The version [in Grove's bill](#) would have been more flexible, including giving every registered voter an ID and allowing voters without one to sign an affidavit affirming their identity. But [the proposed constitutional amendment](#) would be much stricter, requiring "any valid government-issued identification" and not providing for free IDs.

– Voter ID can prompt a backlash that hides its true effects: New election laws don't take effect in a vacuum. Restrictions can anger and energize voters, while civic groups and campaigns often mobilize to counteract them. Pennsylvania experienced a version of this last year, said Dan Hopkins, a University of Pennsylvania political science professor, in response to the state Supreme Court's decision that ["naked ballots" missing their secrecy envelopes must be rejected](#). "The Democratic Party then did extensive voter education," Hopkins said. "It looks like the effect of that education was to ... really reduce the number of naked ballots cast."

– The costs of voting don't always show up in turnout: Whether an individual voted is a straightforward question, but it can hide the costs of voting. Think about long lines at polling places: If a Black voter waits for hours while a white voter waits only a few minutes, both voted, but the cost for the Black voter was much higher. "People might ultimately manage it. That doesn't mean that it's costless," said Ariel White, an MIT political scientist. "We are still imposing very serious costs on people who are trying to vote."

– Voter ID would most likely affect already marginalized groups: Black and Hispanic citizens are less likely than others to have the necessary identification these laws require. So while the impact is hard to measure, it's likely to fall more on those groups, said Hakeem Jefferson, a Stanford political science professor: "When it does matter, it matters disproportionately for people of color." It's also likely to disproportionately affect other already marginalized groups, including poor and low-income voters, voters with disabilities, and the youngest and oldest voters.

– Voter ID affects low-turnout groups: That disparate impact is one reason turnout might not fall when ID requirements are implemented: The groups most likely to be affected already have lower turnout rates and face other barriers. So instead of blocking existing voters, ID rules might raise additional barriers that deter new or future voters. “A lot of the people who would be voting are the kind of people who already have ID,” said Emily Rong Zhang, a political science graduate student at Stanford studying voter ID. “But we also know there’s a large pool out there who don’t have ID, and … they’re disinclined to vote in the first place. And if you care about democracy, it’s not the number of votes cast that you need to be concerned about, it’s losing voters.”

– Voter ID laws can create confusion: Many people won’t know the details of the rules, but will hear about new ID requirements, especially the most controversial ones. “These narratives scare people away from voting, and they make people think maybe there’s going to be a problem when they get to the polls,” Fraga said. “For groups who already feel like their voice doesn’t matter in politics … they hear about a voter ID mandate and it reinforces their worldview, even if they have an ID.” And research suggests that even attempts to cut through the confusion can be met with unequal response. In an experiment, White found that local elections officials were more likely to respond to emails sent from what appear to be non-Hispanic white names than Hispanic ones. “There’s this extra layer of challenges to getting your questions answered and get that help that you need to vote,” White said.

Turnout might not be the best way to measure voter ID – Some experts said people should take a step back from thinking about turnout and partisan impact, and instead adopt a more fundamental framing of voting rights. “In a democracy, the right to vote is sacred,” Jefferson said, adding that “we should simply be bothered by the burden placed on voters, period, irrespective of whether the thing works or not, whether the restrictive voting law works to suppress turnout.”

The challenge is figuring out what to do in negotiating legislation. Chris Warshaw, a political scientist at George Washington University, got pushback from Jefferson and others when he tweeted last month that preventing partisan gerrymandering is worth the trade-off of new ID rules. Ultimately, Warshaw said in an interview, he opposes ID requirements but worries about other issues even more. “In isolation, I would never in a million years support voter ID. But as part of a comprehensive plan, you have to make trade-offs,” he said. “I just think there’s not clear evidence that voter ID rises to that level of being so bad for democracy that it should never be part of a deal.”

Like so much about voter ID, there’s no one clear answer, White said. “There are a lot of potential threats to the functioning of U.S. democracy right now, so I can understand why some legislators would be looking to potentially deal to make some compromises,” she said. “In some ways, this is a moral and a philosophical question and not just an empirical one.” – *Philadelphia Inquirer*

Comcast has opened its fourth [Xfinity store](#) in the midstate in the last eight months. Comcast opened an Xfinity store in December on the Carlisle Pike in Hampden Township. In February, an Xfinity store opened at Cedar Crest Square in North Cornwall Township, Lebanon County. Last month, Comcast opened a store in the Hershey Square shopping center in Derry Township in the former space of One Cup Joe. And last week Comcast opened its newest store in the midstate, this time in York County. Comcast opened the new Xfinity Store in Penn Township near Hanover on the last day of the month at 1150 Carlisle St.

The Xfinity stores have an open format with a showroom and allow customers the chance to see products on displays and ask questions about internet, television, cell phone, home security and landline services. Customers can also pay bills and return, swap and upgrade items. The stores also offer pickup options.

"Our employees can demonstrate the unmatched video experiences on our X1 platform; how Xfinity xFi uses the fastest internet speeds and AI-powered security to transform the home Wi-Fi experience; a growing network of Xfinity Home smart home devices and services; and the advantages inherent in Xfinity Mobile," Toni Murphy, senior vice president of Comcast's Keystone Region said in a press release.

There are more than 30 Xfinity stores in Pennsylvania including a store that opened in Lower Paxton Township in 2017. Comcast officials say they are hopeful that they will open a new Xfinity location in the Carlisle area in the fourth quarter of this year. – **Harrisburg Patriot-News**

