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ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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### Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce Full Committee Business Meeting

### Markup of H.R. 3993, the Calling Card Consumer Protection Act and H.R. 3655, the Bereaved Consumer's Bill of Rights May 5, 2010

Today the Committee is meeting to consider two bills:

- H.R. 3993, the Calling Card Consumer Protection Act; and
- H.R. 3655, the Bereaved Consumer's Bill of Rights

The first bill we will be considering today is H.R. 3993, the Calling Card Consumer Protection Act. Prepaid calling cards are a convenient way for many consumers to place long distance telephone calls. Unfortunately, many calling cards sold today have numerous hidden costs and fail to deliver the full number of advertised minutes. Consumers often find that because of misleading information, inconsistent claims, and buried disclosures, they do not get the services they were promised and essentially are left with a worthless piece of plastic, without recourse.

H.R. 3993 is intended to prevent fraud and abuse in the prepaid calling card industry and to provide consumers with accurate and understandable information about rates, fees, terms, and conditions. The bill requires calling card providers to clearly and conspicuously disclose all relevant information to consumers.

H.R. 3993 was introduced by Representative Engel and was forwarded favorably by the Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection to the full Committee, as amended, by a voice vote.

This bill we are considering today is the result of a bipartisan process, and I urge its passage. I will be introducing a bipartisan manager's amendment that makes one technical change to H.R. 3993, which I will explain in more detail upon introduction.

The second bill we will be considering today is H.R. 3655, the Bereaved Consumer's Bill of Rights. This bill has been a priority for Subcommittee Chairman Bobby Rush, and I am pleased to bring it before the Committee. Grieving families arranging services, cremations, or burials for lost loved ones are at risk of being scammed or otherwise treated unfairly. Most families in this situation are not familiar with the funeral and burial industry. They are not price shopping and cannot use prior experience to guide them as they make decisions.

This legislation would address the risk of fraud and deception by establishing minimum standards for consumer protection across the funeral industry. The Federal Trade Commission already enforces the funeral rule, which requires funeral homes to present price lists and provide certain essential information to families planning funerals. This legislation would extend that type of protection to consumers dealing with cemeteries, crematoria, and sellers of funeral goods such as caskets and memorial stones.

This is important legislation that will fill a gap in consumer protection. I urge my colleagues to support it.