

## **Political parties warned automated calls illegal**

**By Mary Beth Schneider**

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Attorney General Steve Carter warned the political parties today not to make automated phone calls to voters -- a traditional election year practice by both Republicans and Democrats.

Carter, a Republican who ran for attorney general in 2000 and 2004, said the practice violates a 1988 law prohibiting automated calling devices.

Six companies, all from out of state, have been fined under that state law or a similar federal law this year, Carter said, for using automated calling devices to try to market themselves to Hoosiers.

Carter said he sent a letter on Aug. 22 to the chairmen of the state Republican and Democratic parties to inform them of the law. He did not send the same warning to businesses, he said, nor to the Libertarian Party.

Asked why he singled out the two major political parties for this kind of warning, Carter cited the upcoming election season as well as increased public concern about telephone privacy.

Carter said he had never used automated phone calls in his own political campaigns. He had not warned the parties in the past against the practice, however. Now, he said, the office has received a complaint about an automated phone call and is investigating. He would not reveal which campaign that involved.

Dan Parker, chairman of the Indiana Democratic Party, questioned the timing of Carter's announcement, only about two months before a major election in which control of the Indiana House and Congress are at stake.

He said his office had planned to make such calls beginning in October, but now is reviewing the law before deciding how to proceed.

Indiana GOP Chairman Murray Clark could not be immediately reached for comment.

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