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Press Contact

Linden Zakula

Communications Director

(202) 224-3244

Amy in the News

Klobuchar: CenturyLink Joins AT&T and Verizon in Putting a Stop to Cramming on Phone Bills After Verizon agreed to stop placing third-party charges on landline phone bills, Klobuchar sent a letter to CenturyLink and AT&T urging them to join Verizon and put an end to "cramming" practices; AT&T agreed to stop the practice on landline phones last week; Klobuchar recently sent a letter to the Federal Communications Commission calling on them to fight deceptive billing practices on cell phones as well as landlines

April 3, 2012

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar today said that CenturyLink has joined AT&T and Verizon in putting a stop to landline phone bill "cramming," which is when a third party adds unauthorized, misleading, or deceptive charges to a consumer's bill. After Verizon agreed to stop placing third-party charges on landline phone bills, Klobuchar wrote a letter to AT&T and CenturyLink last month urging them to join Verizon and put an end to deceptive billing practices. Last week, AT&T also announced that it would join Verizon and work to end landline phone bill cramming. Klobuchar recently sent a letter to Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Julius Genachowski calling on the agency to fight deceptive billing tactics on cell phones as well as landlines.

"I am pleased that CenturyLink has joined Verizon and AT&T and agreed to ban these cramming practices so customers don't have to play detective to uncover ghost charges they never authorized," Klobuchar said. **"While this is welcome news, it's important we continue to crack down on deceptive billing practices so we don't see the same cramming tactics land on consumer's cell phone bills."**

"Cramming" comes in many forms, but it typically refers to "mystery charges" buried in the details of a consumer's phone bill. Crammers trick consumers by pretending to offer something for "free" but then apply charges to consumers' phone bills. The monthly charges are listed with vague descriptions, so consumers often do not detect the unauthorized charges for months.

Klobuchar has been a leader in pushing to make sure consumers have access to clear and accurate phone bills free from hidden charges and has consistently pressed the FCC to crack down on "cramming." Last year she introduced legislation with Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) to require wireless providers to disclose complete and accurate information about their 4G wireless data service, and she has also introduced legislation to pro-rate early termination fees and to require carriers to provide better coverage maps and clearer bills. She has also teamed up with Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson on this issue.

Klobuchar is a member of the Senate Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet, which has oversight over the FCC and the wireless industry.

###

Senator Klobuchar's Offices

[Washington, D.C.](#)

[Metro](#)

[South](#)

[Northwest & Central](#)

[Northeast](#)

302 Hart Senate Office Building

Washington, DC 20510

Main Line: 202-224-3244

Main Fax: 202-228-2186

Toll Free: 1-888-224-9043

1200 Washington Avenue South, Room 250

Minneapolis, MN 55415

Main Line: 612-727-5220

Main Fax: 612-727-5223

Toll Free: 1-888-224-9043

1130 1/2 7th Street NW, Room 208

Rochester, MN 55901

Main Line: 507-288-5321

Fax: 507-288-2922

121 4th Street South

Moorhead, MN 56560

Main Line: 218-287-2219

Fax: 218-287-2930

Olcott Plaza, Room 105

820 9th Street North

Virginia, MN 55792

Main Line: 218-741-9690

Fax: 218-741-3692

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