



# Citizens Utility Board

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

Oct. 19, 2009

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**LEGISLATION COMBATING PHONE FRAUD PASSES HOUSE AND  
SENATE, COULD BE SIGNED THIS WEEK**

A bill pushed by the Citizens Utility Board (CUB) and Rep. John Bradley of Marion to crack down on fraudulent phone charges is one step away from becoming law.

SB 1421 would combat a problem the phone industry calls “cramming” by forcing third party companies to contact customers and verify any charges before slapping them on a customer’s phone bill. The bill, approved unanimously by the Illinois House in May, was passed unanimously by the Illinois Senate on Thursday. It now awaits the Governor's signature.

“This bill would better protect us from predatory companies looking to line their pockets with our hard-earned money,” CUB Executive Director David Kolata said. “Consumers’ phone bills are high enough already without paying fraudulent charges.”

“This is a great step forward for consumers in Illinois,” Rep. Bradley said. “At a time when consumers throughout Illinois are struggling to make ends meet, unexpected charges on phone service add to those struggles.”

Rep. Bradley found himself a victim of cramming earlier this year after his wife discovered unauthorized charges on their telephone bill. Bradley quickly turned to CUB for help.

“Cramming” is when a carrier places an unauthorized charge on a customer’s bill for a service the customer never ordered. The vaguely-named charges, like “voice mail” or

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“membership fee,” often originate from a business separate from the phone company, and can usually be found on the last page of the phone bill.

Customers who think they’ve been crammed should:

- Call the cramming company at the number listed on the bill and ask them to remove the charge. You may also be entitled to a credit if you’ve paid the charge in previous months.

- Call the local phone company and inform them that you are disputing the charge and will only pay for your regular calling fees.

If the cramming company refuses to lift the charge, file a complaint with the Illinois Attorney General’s office by calling 1-800-243-0607. Keep one copy for yourself and send the other to the cramming company.

CUB is Illinois’ leading nonprofit utility watchdog organization. Created by the Illinois Legislature, CUB opened its doors in 1984 to represent the interests of residential and small-business utility customers. Now celebrating its 25th anniversary, CUB has saved consumers more than \$10 billion by helping to block rate hikes and secure refunds over the years. For more information, call CUB’s Consumer Hotline at 1-800-669-5556 or visit CUB’s award-winning website, **[www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org](http://www.CitizensUtilityBoard.org)**.

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