



Consumer's Right to Know

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The Communications Workers of America supports efforts to restore confidence in the booming call center market, save precious jobs here in America, and help provide a measure of security for telephone and Internet consumer transactions. That is why CWA supports The Call Center Consumer's Right to Know Act of 2003, S. 1873 introduced by Sen. John Kerry (D-MA), and HR. 3816 by Rep. Ted Strickland (D-6th OH).

In today's economy, consumers increasingly use the telephone or Internet to buy goods and services, inquire about transactions and bills, and get technical support or other information. It is estimated that more than 70 percent of customer interaction occurs in call centers.

Most telephone and Internet-based customer service transactions are provided by customer service or sales representatives located in centralized call centers. There are more than 50,000 call centers in the United States and another 50,000 call centers abroad. In the U.S., an estimated 6 million employees work in these centers. However, these numbers are changing fast – for the worse. Many companies and public entities no longer operate their own customer sales and service operations, but contract with a third party call center operator to provide the service. Information technology and marketing techniques have transformed customer sales and service delivery from what was historically a local, decentralized and personal labor market to one characterized by centralized remote servicing via technology mediated call centers.

Consumers should have a right to know where they are calling and who they are talking to. This is what The Call Center Consumer's Right to Know Act of 2003 will provide. Some customers prefer using local or American companies. Taxpayers may prefer that tax-supported services provide local employment. Consumers have a right to know that the call they place to what they believe is an "American" company is in fact answered by someone located in India, Vietnam, the Philippines, or any number of off-shore locations.

But because of the sensitivity of sending U.S. jobs offshore, many foreign-based contractors have instructed their employees to conceal their true locations.

For more information contact: [T Santora](#), CWA Representative-Legislation at (202) 434-1315

Email: tsantora@cwa-union.org

www.cwa-governmentaffairs.org
