



Senator Larry Obhof
22nd Ohio Senate District

GUEST COLUMN

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OHIO SENATE PASSES BILL TO COMBAT CYBER FRAUD

In recent years, advances in technology have simplified our lives and made tasks such as shopping and paying bills easier. As our reliance on technology has increased, however, so has the opportunity for criminal activity.

Here in Ohio, there has been an increase in “cyber fraud,” where a criminal uses electronic means such as the internet or telephone to commit scams, fraud and other economic crimes. A common example is when an individual receives a phone call or e-mail from someone pretending to be a family member or close friend, saying he or she is in trouble and needs money.

Many of these scams are well-known. It seems that almost everyone has, at one time or another, received e-mails from someone posing as a Nigerian diplomat, who promises vast sums of money if you help him escape to America by sending him your bank account number. Although well known, the threat from these scams is real, and they take in their fair share of victims. Due to the nature of the crimes committed, as well as under-reporting by victims who feel embarrassed, it is often difficult to pursue criminal charges against offenders, leaving them free to strike again.

To help address this growing problem, the Ohio Senate recently passed Senate Bill 223. Senate Bill 223 gives the Ohio Attorney General new tools to investigate telecommunications fraud, including the ability to issue subpoenas for phone records and payment information. The bill also strengthens the criminal penalties for committing fraud against elderly and disabled people in Ohio.

These new tools will enable the Attorney General to assist other law enforcement agencies with cyber fraud investigations and prosecutions. As these types of crime become more sophisticated, it is imperative that Ohio becomes more aggressive in investigating and holding people accountable for committing telecommunications fraud.

As a member of the Judiciary Committee that held hearings on Senate Bill 223, I want to thank all those who came and provided testimony on this bill – including Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine. Senate Bill 223 now moves to the Ohio House of Representatives, and I am hopeful for its passage in the months ahead so that we can take yet another step forward in our efforts to protect Ohioans.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of cyber fraud, you can lodge a complaint with the Consumer Protection Section of the Ohio Attorney General's Office by calling 1-800-282-0515 or filling out an online form by visiting www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov and clicking on the "Consumer" tab.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have questions or concerns about any issue facing Ohio. I can be reached by phone at (614) 466-7505 or by e-mail at SD22@senate.state.oh.us. You may also reach me by mail at State Senator Larry Obhof, 1 Capitol Square, 1st Floor, Columbus, OH 43215.

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State Senator Larry Obhof represents the 22nd Ohio Senate District, which encompasses Medina, Holmes and Wayne counties and portions of Ashland County. For more information, please visit www.ohiosenate.gov/larry-obhof.