

## GUEST EDITORIAL FROM THE ALBANY DEMOCRAT-HERALD

### Skepticism best defense against scams

Here's some bad news: There's no indication the number of telephone scams that afflict us is going to decline any time soon.

This week a new wave of a relatively old scam made the rounds. It's worth taking some time to go into this particular scam in depth, because it offers a bit of insight into the question we know you've asked yourself as you read about these cases: How do people fall for these?

The short answer is because scammers on the other end have crafted their technique to the point where they're experts on playing on people's fears. And they're skilled at keeping their victims on the phone until the financial damage is done. (This is why the best advice is to just hang up.)

But let's take a deeper look at this week's featured scam.

Linn County residents received phone calls from someone purporting to be Capt. Guilford from the Sheriff's Office. This is particularly troubling, because there is a Capt. Guilford who works at the Sheriff's Office, but the actual Guilford was not the fellow who was calling. Remember that scammers can easily pull names like that from websites and other public information. (Scammers can also fool your caller ID system so it appears the phone call is coming from the Sheriff's Office or the IRS or some other governmental entity; the point to remember is your caller ID offers little protection against scammers.)

In any event, "Capt. Guilford" reports that you have an outstanding warrant and because you didn't show up for court, you now have a federal subpoena. The caller then asks you to get a prepaid money card and pay your fine over the phone. Once you've read the numbers of the money card to the caller, your money is gone.

Here's the bottom line: Law enforcement agencies will never ask you for money over the phone.

But here, courtesy of a Facebook post about one of these scams, is an account of an experience a Linn County woman went through this week. The caller introduced himself as a law enforcement officer and was official-sounding. He went through the malarkey about how the woman had missed a date for an appearance before a federal grand jury.

At this point, the woman is thinking, "Well, maybe I missed a piece of mail. It's possible."

Eventually, though, the woman got suspicious and started asking for more information. When the fraudster told her he couldn't give her his badge number, her suspicions only increased. What happened next is typical: The caller got more aggressive in his speech, talking faster and louder and trying to bully and intimidate her.

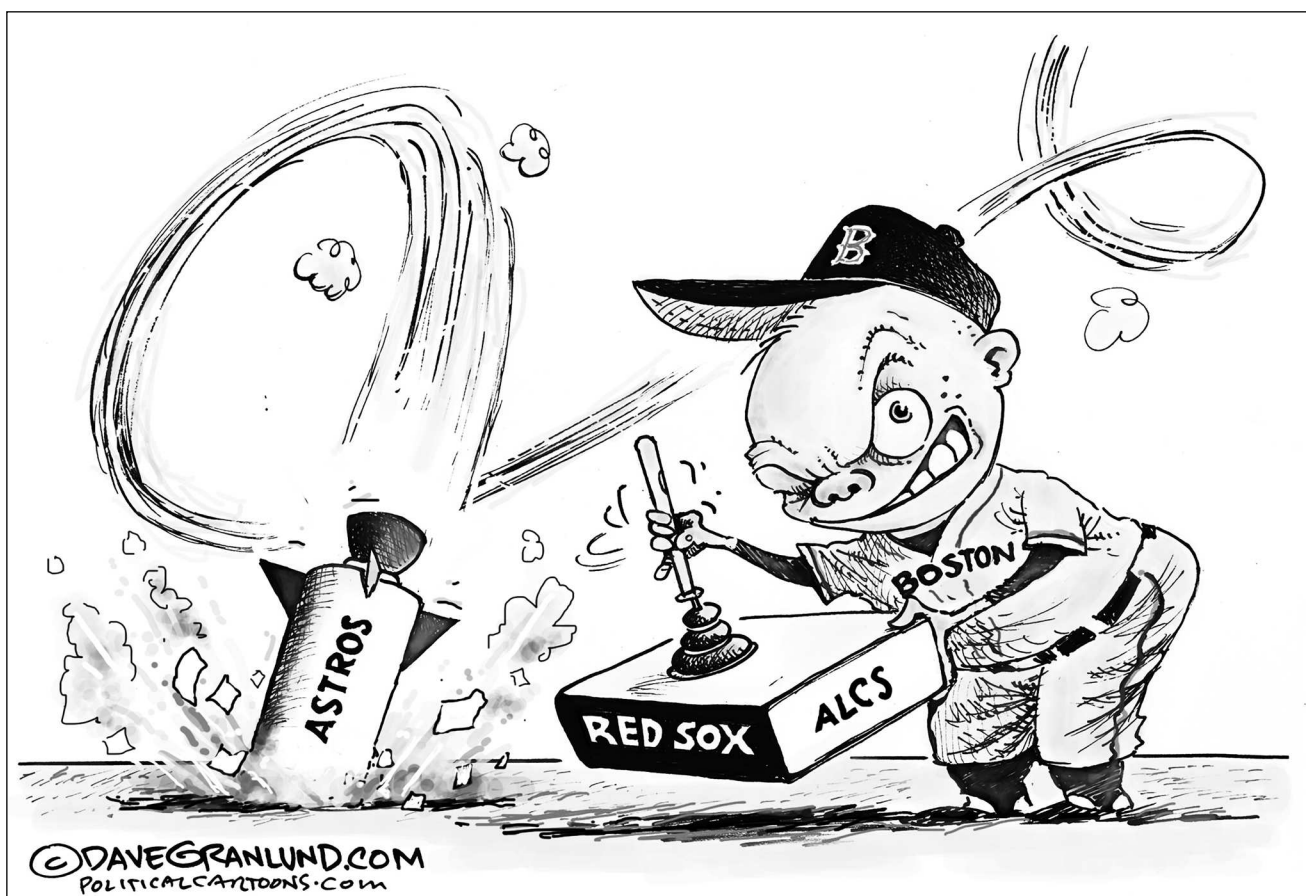
So the woman did a smart thing: She said she had an appointment and needed to hang up. The response, again, was typical: The caller told her not to hang up, implying that there would be a warrant for her arrest if she did so. At this point, the caller is trying to keep the victim on the line for as long as possible.

The victim thwarted that strategy, though, by hanging up — and then calling the Linn County Sheriff's Office.

It's good to let legitimate law enforcement agencies know about these calls, but the fact is those agencies can't always do much to track down fraudsters. So we need to keep our defenses up. If you get a call like this, and something just doesn't seem right, just hang up.

And our defenses are going to have to stay up. A recent report from a private company concluded nearly half of all cellphone calls next year will come from scammers. The company, First Orion, says scam calls now make up 29 percent of all cellphone calls; next year, the company said, that number will jump to 45 percent.

That's discouraging. But it's another reminder that a touch or two of skepticism is the best defense against these telephone scams.



## Your views

### Ebbert: Walden is not the same man he was 20 years ago

To the Editor:

In response to the letter of Sept. 21 extolling the virtues of Mr. Walden, our congressional representative, perhaps the author would provide clarification of his statements.

Mr. Walden has held this office for 20 years and may have been an outstanding representative when first elected. I am not the same man today as I was 20 years ago and I believe he may have a similar problem. Mr. Walden ignores his constituents. Rather than voting to save the Affordable Care Act, he authored a new bill that would make health care unaffordable to one in five of his constituents, even though hundreds demonstrated throughout his district and contacted him by mail and phone in support of ACA. He rarely holds actual town halls and limits notice to the day of the meeting. His telephone "town halls" are simply a vehicle to promote himself.

The Sept. 21 letter states: "He has tremendously helped veterans, small business owners, agriculture producers, energy concerns and water users and helped with broadband communications upgrades."

Mr. Walden stood by while this administration stripped funding for the State Department, Education Department, Environmental Protection Agency, Health Care, Foreign Relations and many more. At the same time there has been a huge increase in the Defense budget so it is now larger than the combined budgets of the next 15 countries in the world.

He has voted to remove the requirement for employers to maintain accurate records of employ-

ee's accident and illness, relied on by insurance and L&I reports. This is a critical attack on worker safety programs.

Mr. Walden has sponsored and co-sponsored many addictive medication bills this term. His primary funding is from pharmaceutical and medical organizations. Why so many bills? Do each of these include various loopholes?

He has voted to revoke the Department of the Interior's rule dealing with impacts of surface coal mining operations on surface water, groundwater and the productivity of mining operation sites. Is this the "help" provided to energy concerns and water users?

These are only a few examples. I could go on, but I am out of space.

David Ebbert  
Enterprise

### Birkmaier: Walden is the voice of reason

To the Editor:

I am writing to encourage you to cast your vote for Greg Walden for Congress. My husband and I have a small business in the timber industry. We truly appreciate that Greg has been relentless in the uphill battle to get real change in federal timber policies, which include active and consistent management plans. The Northwest must be allowed to actively manage our forest resources so they don't continue to go up in smoke each summer and clog vital fisheries with mud, soot and silt every spring, not to mention the health consequences of breathing thick smoke for six months a year. Active management means jobs and pride in community, so what's not to like?

Please join us in voting for Greg Walden, the con-

tinuing voice of reason and integrity for the natural resources industry.

Gina Birkmaier  
Enterprise

### McCarthy: Wes Williams is thoughtful and balanced

To the Editor:

I am a retired police officer, having served the law enforcement community in Oregon for a career of 32 years.

For 25 of those years, I was a supervisor of other officers. In my 10 years as a detective sergeant, I supervised Narcotics, Internal Affairs and Domestic Terrorism units.

In all my varied assignments, I worked with many prosecutors and defense attorneys, in legal cases brought in front

of either a major Oregon city, the State of Oregon or the federal government. I have also testified in front of a number of judges in criminal and civil matters. I write now, reflecting back on those experiences.

Even as a young cop, I came to appreciate the balance and insight and, yes, even the empathy, brought to the negotiation or trial prep table by lawyers who have put in years of defense and civil work. They regularly sit in rooms and across a desk that career prosecutors rarely have to deal with.

Circuit judge candidate Wes Williams has never represented me, but I have known him for many years. We have had a number of opportunities to share our thoughts about criminal

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