

H.R. 1422, would provide fines of up to \$500 and a maximum 6-month prison term upon conviction, punishment to fit the crime.

It is my hope that legislation of this sort will be enacted this year, for the problem of menacing phone calls appears to be growing. This unfortunate trend is confirmed by available statistics. Last year, an average of 58,000 abusive calls a month were reported to the Bell System telephone companies, a 13-percent increase over the 1966 average of 51,000.

These figures, while ominous enough, don't begin to tell the full story of just how widespread this vicious practice has become. Telephone company officials believe that at least 10 obscene or threatening calls go unreported for every one that is disclosed, so the true monthly totals could well approach a half million or more.

In any event, the legislative remedies under consideration today are long overdue. A bill for curbing abusive interstate calls was passed without dissent by the Senate last year. I would therefore urge this distinguished subcommittee to move swiftly and positively to permit the House to complete congressional approval of this vital legislation. With the abusive calls rate rising so rapidly, I don't see how we can do less.

Mr. KORNEGAY. Thank you, Mr. Van Deerlin. If there are no questions, we shall hear next from another colleague and member of our full committee, the Honorable John Murphy. Mr. Murphy is the sponsor of H.R. 6283, one of the identical bills under consideration today. Please proceed as you see fit, Mr. Murphy.

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN M. MURPHY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to testify this morning in support of S. 375 and related bills to amend the Communications Act of 1934 with respect to obscene or harassing telephone calls in interstate and foreign commerce and in the District of Columbia.

As a sponsor of one of these bills, I am delighted that this subcommittee is now conducting hearings on this important legislation.

The need for this legislation is both obvious and urgent. In 1966, at the request of the Federal Communications Commission, the Bell System, which provides more than 80 percent of the Nation's telephones, began to gather statistics on obscene and harassing phone calls. In an 11-month period in 1966 over 568,000 complaints of such calls were reported—an average of more than 51,000 each month. In the first 11 months of 1967 more than 640,000 complaints were reported—an average of more than 58,000 each month.

These abusive calls take many forms: some are obscene, others are merely bothersome or annoying. Recently a new and more serious type of abusive telephone call has been reported; families of servicemen are receiving calls giving false reports of death or injury, and in some cases the families are reminded of the death of a son or husband in the service.

The majority of these calls are intrastate and would not be covered by this legislation. However, all States have laws which prohibit such