

Meeting with the Legislative Director and Technology and Transportation Policy Advisor from

Rep. Jan Schakowsky's office

Meeting Date May 8, 2023 @ 4:00PM EST

On May 8, 2023 Co-Founders or Advocating Against Romance Scammers (AARS) Kathy Waters and Bryan Denny along with CEO of Alliance to Counter Crime Online (ACCO) Gretchen Peters, met with the Legislative Director and Technology and Transportation Policy Advisor from Rep. Jan Schakowsky's office on behalf of platform safety and the need for online crimes to be illegal on social media platforms. The meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes via Zoom. Because we are both Federal Nonprofits, we attend each meeting with the intention of providing information that could help open the eyes of congressional offices about crimes online, in particular, online romance scams. The following is what was noted from the meeting.

Online Consumer Protection Act

The Online Consumer Protection Act introduced in 2021, is a piece of legislation drawn up by the office of Rep. Jan Schakowsky. This law was made to help protect the consumers by way of understanding what social media platforms' policies are, with the right of the consumer to hold these companies responsible for their own policies. As explained by the Technology and Transportation Policy Advisor, if social media shows continued violations of their own policies, it would be at the discretion of the Federal Trade Commission to strip the company from their CDA 230 protection. AARS will be sharing with Rep. Schakowsky's team, reports and its research conducted by both Bryan and Kathy focusing on two Big Tech Giants who clearly went against their own community standards/policies.

Looking for Republican Representatives

Because the issue of online crimes is considered a bipartisan issue (where both parties can agree when change needs to happen). Rep. Schakowsky's team is on the lookout for Republicans wanting to champion the bill with them. We did inform the team that Rep. Devin Nunes is also looking to write a bill this month regarding platform safety, possibly an opportunity to work together.

Numbers Out of Illinois

From the Internet Crimes Complaint Center (IC3.gov) Kathy provided the team the amount of money lost, and the number of victims that reported being cyber scammed out of the state of Illinois in 2022.

Wrap-up

Overall, we felt the meeting went well. The team was very interested in reading the Community Sub-Standards report created by AARS as well as any other stats or reports that we were able to provide. Kathy sent the report, along with a lengthy list of fake accounts that were reported on Facebook and remain active, along with screenshot samples of the organized crime occurring across Facebook's platform. We will be following up with Rep. Schakowsky's office soon for the status of her Online Consumer Protection Act, and where either ACCO or AARS can be of assistance with educating about crimes online.

Shout Out

AARS would like to thank ACCO'S CEO/Co-Founder Gretchen Peters for requesting the meeting with Rep. Schakowsky's office and bringing in her expertise, and key speaking points. ACCO has been an incredible supporter of AARS's work and we can not thank them enough for the wonderful connections we have made, and partnership they have offered us in this fight.