



Stop  
Scams  
Alliance

# ANNUAL REPORT 2024



**December 2024**

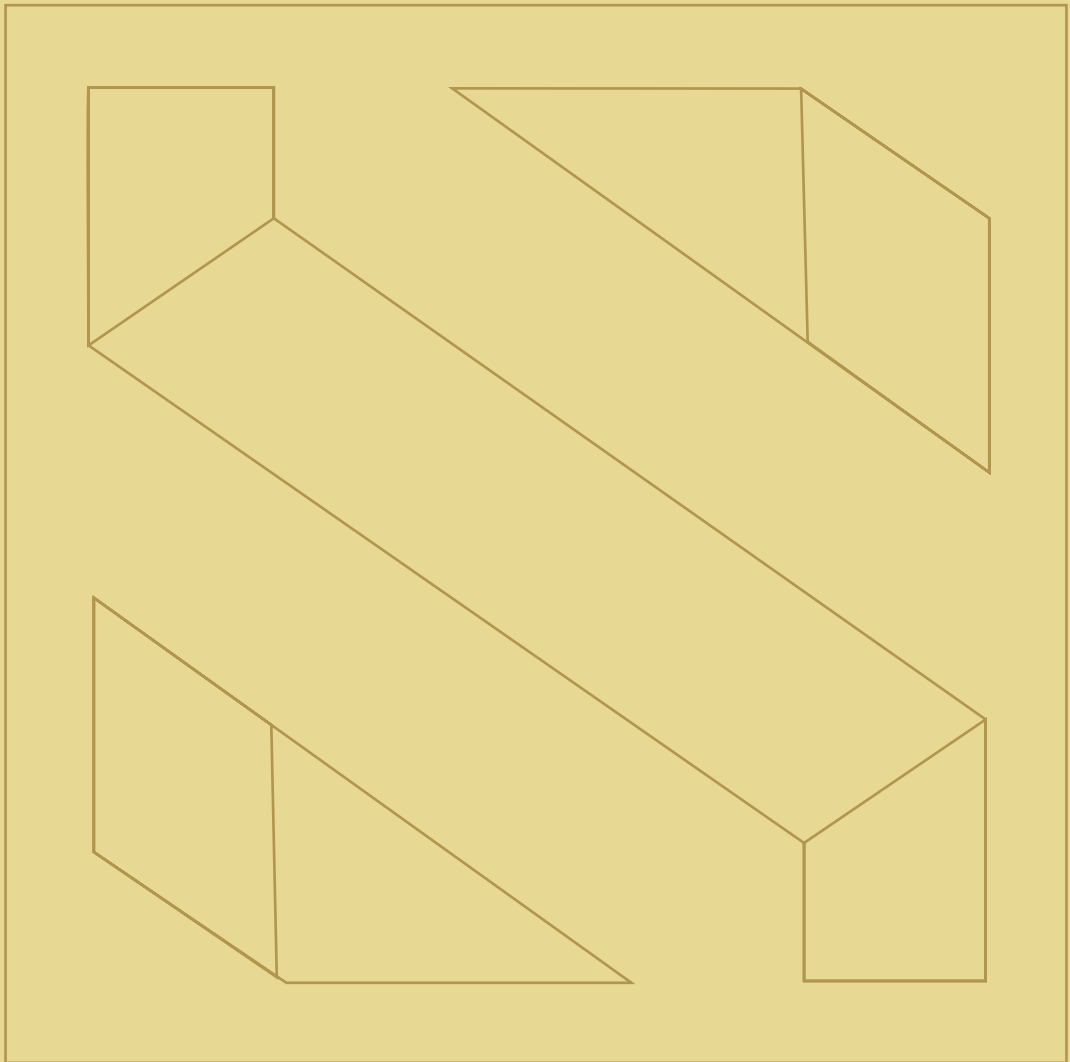


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# Executive Summary

In 2024, Stop Scams Alliance focused on developing a solid research base and targeted, achievable policy initiatives. We created and began advancing the first-ever comprehensive strategy to combat technology-enabled scams in the United States. The strategy pulls separate government and business efforts together into a framework of technical and policy solutions that rest on a foundation of shared information and scam reporting.

We formed a powerhouse Board of Directors, gained nonprofit status, and achieved recognition as leading experts in the field. We are proud to be on the Steering Committee of the Aspen Institute National Task Force on Fraud and Scam Prevention.

Our signature achievements:

- A Gallup survey that contributed significant new findings about the size and nature of the problem of scams in the United States.
- Op-eds in major news publications, including *The Washington Post*, *Fox News*, and *The Cipher Brief*.
- The US Senate Aging Committee asked us to submit a Statement for the Record, which provided nine recommendations for addressing scams. The House Financial Services Committee also accepted our statement into the Congressional Record.
- The Office of the National Cyber Director at the White House requested our help to begin building a more comprehensive national strategy to address scams.
- Stop Scams Alliance used its influence to prompt the Census Bureau to conduct a new survey on fraud--the first the US government has conducted since 2017.
- Attracting two charter sponsors and creating 10 partnerships with like-minded consumer organizations.

# Much accomplished. Much work ahead.

## Our Goals



Document the extent of consumer fraud in the United States and raise public awareness about the extent of the crisis



## Our Accomplishments

Arranged Gallup survey and a forthcoming Census Bureau survey; op-eds in Fox News, Washington Post, and Cipher Brief; more than a dozen published papers; briefings to more than 1,000 officials



Allow consumers to easily report an attempted scam and report after a victim has been defrauded, which would improve our ability to stop scams and enable law enforcement to respond



Documented the success other countries have achieved by allowing consumers to easily report scams. Briefed Government Coordinating Council on the need to create a standardized taxonomy and business process



Promote information sharing on scams via a national data-sharing hub, involving public-private partnership



A key feature in all of our white papers. Explained the power of a centralized hub like the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, a public-private partnership



Create trusted, verified communications that deny fraudsters the ability to impersonate reputable companies



Documented methods being implemented in other countries that reduce impersonation scams by means such as authentication of text messages and other communications



Mitigate the technology risks that allow criminals to take over a computer and steal a person's life's savings



We are one of few consumer organizations that focus on this attack method. We have developed specific recommendations and have briefed various government agencies and companies on mitigation techniques



Champion a national strategy to improve government coordination, to prevent fraud from reaching people in the first place and to empower regulators, law enforcement, and consumers



Developed and began advancing the first-ever comprehensive strategy to combat scams in the United States. The strategy creates a framework of technical and policy solutions to combat the growing scourge of scams



## Message from the CEO:

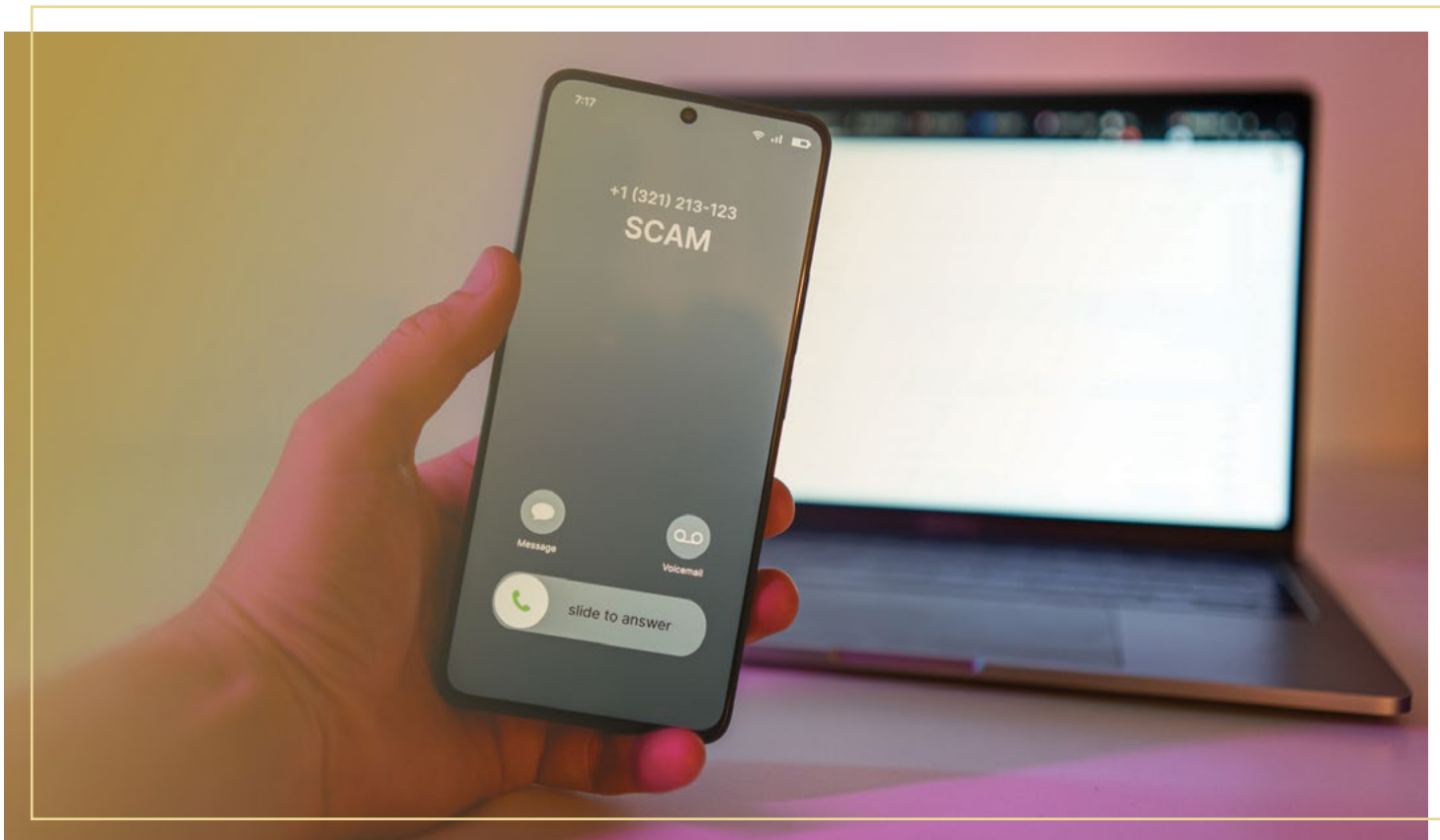
*Scams have become some of the most common and damaging crimes in the United States, with sophisticated criminal networks targeting millions of Americans each year. The proceeds (more than \$150 billion annually) are used to fuel more crime, such as human slavery, human trafficking, drugs, and terrorism. The rapid growth in transnational crime poses a threat to our society and to our national security. The need for cross-sector cooperation to fight back has never been more urgent.*

*The awareness activities and strategy created by Stop Scams Alliance has helped create a turning point in the United States in the last year. The US Government and major US companies are now engaging because of the dire threat posed by the tsunami of scam attacks. Stop Scams Alliance is contributing its expert strategic analysis to help the United States mount a more effective defense.*

*The good news is that we can turn the tide. Best practices in other countries have shown that with an organized and well-funded approach, the United States would quickly save millions of victims and tens of billions in losses to the US economy.*

*The team at Stop Scams Alliance is “all in” for the fight ahead!*

-- Ken Westbrook



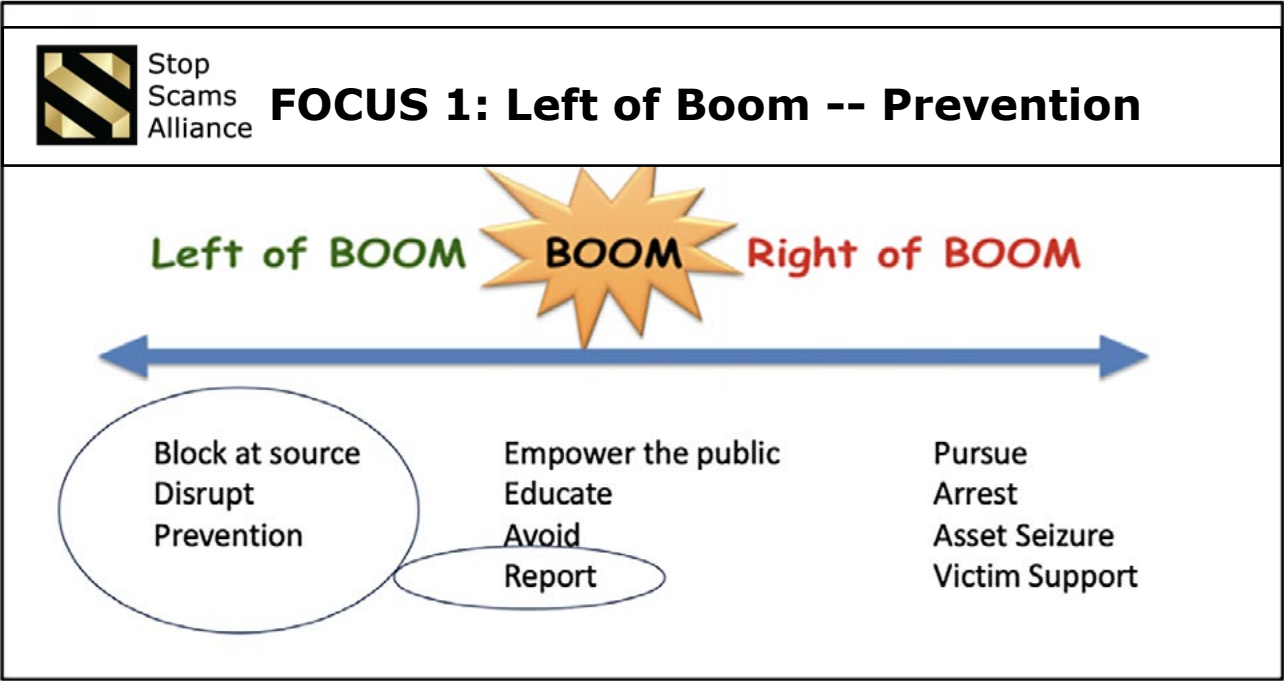
# Mission and Vision

The mission of Stop Scams Alliance is to significantly reduce scams in the United States through a comprehensive, whole-of-society approach involving public-private partnership and cross-sector cooperation from technology, telecom, financial institutions, consumer advocacy groups, and government. The focus is to stop scams at the source, before they reach the consumer.

# Our Pillars

Four pillars underpin the unique contributions Stop Scams Alliance makes to the global effort to combat consumer scams.

1) **Focus on “left of boom.”** Stop Scams Alliance is the only US consumer group that focuses exclusively on preventing scams at the source—before they ever reach the American consumer. While education and law enforcement support are important, we champion methods to stop scams before they occur. We focus on stopping the ever-increasing blizzard of fake emails, spoofed phone calls, scam texts, and malicious ads that are being used by criminals to scam Americans.



2) **Focus on unbiased data.** Good public policy requires good data. We worked with Gallup on the first-ever national survey on scams that was not conducted by an interest group. We are also working to create the first US Census survey on fraud since 2017.



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## FOCUS 2: "Good Policy Needs Good Data"

GALLUP®

POLITICS NOVEMBER 21, 2023

# Scams: Relatively Common and Anxiety-Inducing for Americans

3) **Illuminate best practices around the globe.** The most efficient and effective solutions to consumer fraud in America should build on successful practices elsewhere. We see no place for a "not invented here" attitude or to reinvent wheels that are working in other nations. Countries like the UK and Australia are bending the curve. So can the United States.

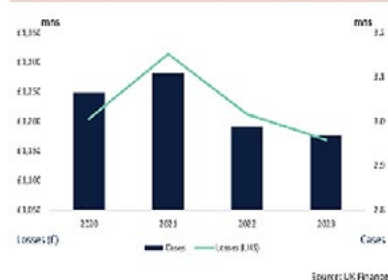


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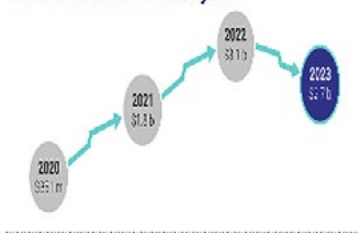
## FOCUS 3: Study Global Best Practices



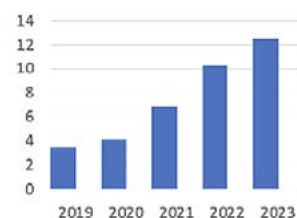
Chart 1 Total fraud losses and case volumes, millions



Combined losses over last 4 years



Losses reported to FBI/IC3, billions





4) **Recognize the national security threat posed by scams.** Foreign organized criminals who scam American citizens drain our national wealth and fuel further illicit and harmful actions against our populace. Stop Scams Alliance published a 2023 article in The Cipher Brief highlighting the threat posed by transnational criminals who are scamming at industrial scale. In September 2024 the US Secret Service testified to Congress:

*Defeating this organized criminal activity is not just a humanitarian imperative, but a **critical national security concern** [emphasis added], as we have seen substantial interplay between these sorts of organized transnational fraud schemes and foreign efforts to evade sanctions, steal funds, profit from ransomware, and other criminal activity.*



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## FOCUS 4: National Security Threat



Your Trusted Source for National Security News & Analysis

November 3rd, 2024 | 8:07 AM ET

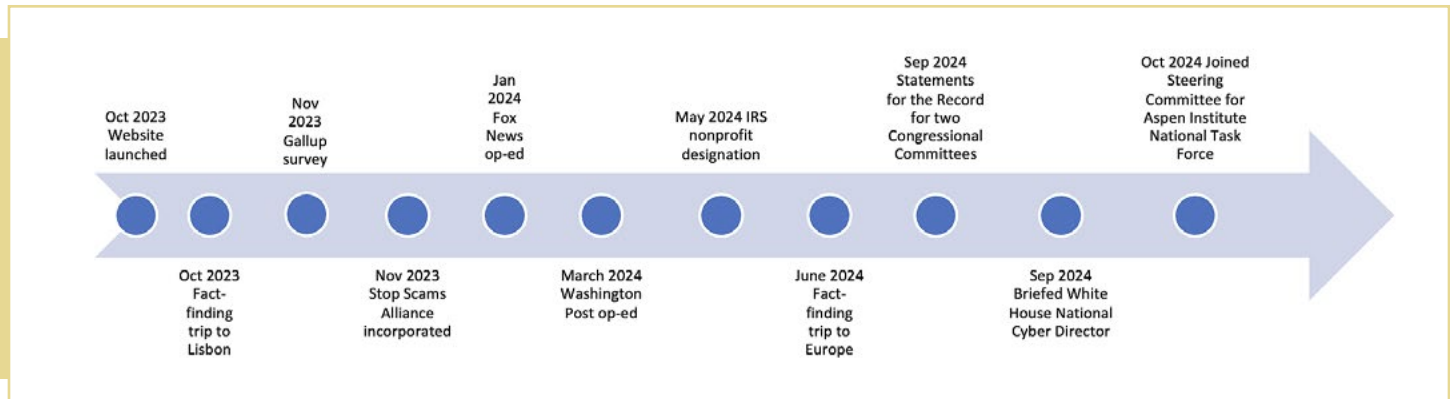
TRENDING: ISRAEL HAMAS MIDDLE EAST UKRAINE RUSSIA TECH/CYBER

### Foreign Criminals are Scamming Americans out of Billions of Dollars. Is it a National Security Threat?



# Achievements and Impact

## Year 1: This is the start of something big



## Scoping the Scam Threat

Stop Scams Alliance leveraged its analytic and technical expertise to conduct and publish the most comprehensive body of research to date on the scam threat facing American citizens and the policy choices to ameliorate the threat. Our analysis was informed by two international fact-finding trips and meetings with dozens of foreign government officials to learn about best practices around the world. Our contributions to the literature took the form of more than a dozen in-depth research papers/briefings, op-eds, and policy position papers.

Specific contributions included:

- Stop Scams Alliance partnered with the internationally renowned polling firm Gallup to conduct the first rigorous nationwide survey of scams' impact in America. We showed that 21 million Americans were scammed in the past year—a far larger number than the approximately 1 million scam victims who report to the US Government each year.
- Stop Scams Alliance convinced the Census Bureau to conduct a new survey on fraud—the first the US government has conducted since 2017. This survey will collect much-needed data on the extent of scams in the United States, the main methods of attack, whether victims reported the crime, etc.
- We briefed officials across the US Government who wanted to learn more about the effective countermeasures being adopted by our allies overseas. Requesters included the Congress and many Executive Branch offices.
- We documented the extent to which transnational crime is behind the scams against Americans. A year after our research in 2023, US officials in 2024 began to refer to scams as a “critical national security concern” because of the threat to our economy and our communication and financial systems, and the fact that the stolen proceeds are fueling more organized crime.

## Increasing Awareness

Our research showed that effective anti-scam measures only emerge when a public consensus exists on the seriousness of the foreign scam threat. That threat is vastly underappreciated in the United States, so Stop Scams Alliance worked to raise the level of awareness.

### In Media

**Summer/Fall 2023:** Stop Scams Alliance published three analyses that contained meaty policy options borne from our examination of global best practices:

- *Scams Against Americans are Skyrocketing. The US Tech Sector and Government can Turn the Tide*
- *It is Time to Declare War on Spoofers*
- *Tech Support scams are escalating dramatically. What should society do to respond?*

**December 2023:** Stop Scams Alliance publicly raised scams as a national security threat in The Cipher Brief, a national security-focused media outlet. *Foreign Criminals are Scamming Americans out of Billions of Dollars. Is it a National Security Threat?*

**January 2024:** Stop Scams Alliance broke into the national media with an op-ed published in Fox News. *Scams are the policy problem no one is talking about* The bottom line: “If the US doesn’t act soon on scams, more and more lives will be ruined.”

**March 2024:** The scam threat received further national coverage when Stop Scams Alliance worked with former FBI and CIA Director William H. Webster and his wife, Lynda Webster to publish an editorial in The Washington Post. *Scams are on the rise, and they’re ruining lives. We can stop it.* The Websters pulled no punches in their call to action:

*“Enough is enough. We must move rapidly to increase our defenses against this growing national security threat. Every day we wait to start a serious anti-fraud campaign, more lives are being ruined. It’s time for that to stop.”*



## With US Government

Stop Scams Alliance briefed or met with more than 1,000 representatives from over a dozen federal agencies, Congressional staffs, and influential trade groups in 2024. Notable briefings: White House Office of the National Cyber Director, Secret Service, Securities and Exchange Commission (twice) and the Department of Homeland Security/Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

### Outreach in 2024

- White House/ONCD
- US Senate
- US House of Representatives
- US Secret Service
- US Department of Justice
- Securities and Exchange Commission
- Department of Homeland Security/CISA
- Social Security Administration
- Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC)
- National Association of Attorneys General
- Alliance of Attorneys General
- North American Securities Administrators Association
- Aspen Institute
- FINRA
- Tech Against Scams



**September 2024:** The Senate Special Committee on Aging asked Stop Scams Alliance to submit a Statement for the Record to support a committee hearing. We also submitted a Statement for the Record to the House Financial Services Committee.

**September/October 2024:** Stop Scams Alliance met several times with the Office of the National Cyber Director to discuss a plan for raising the nation's defenses against cyber-enabled scams.





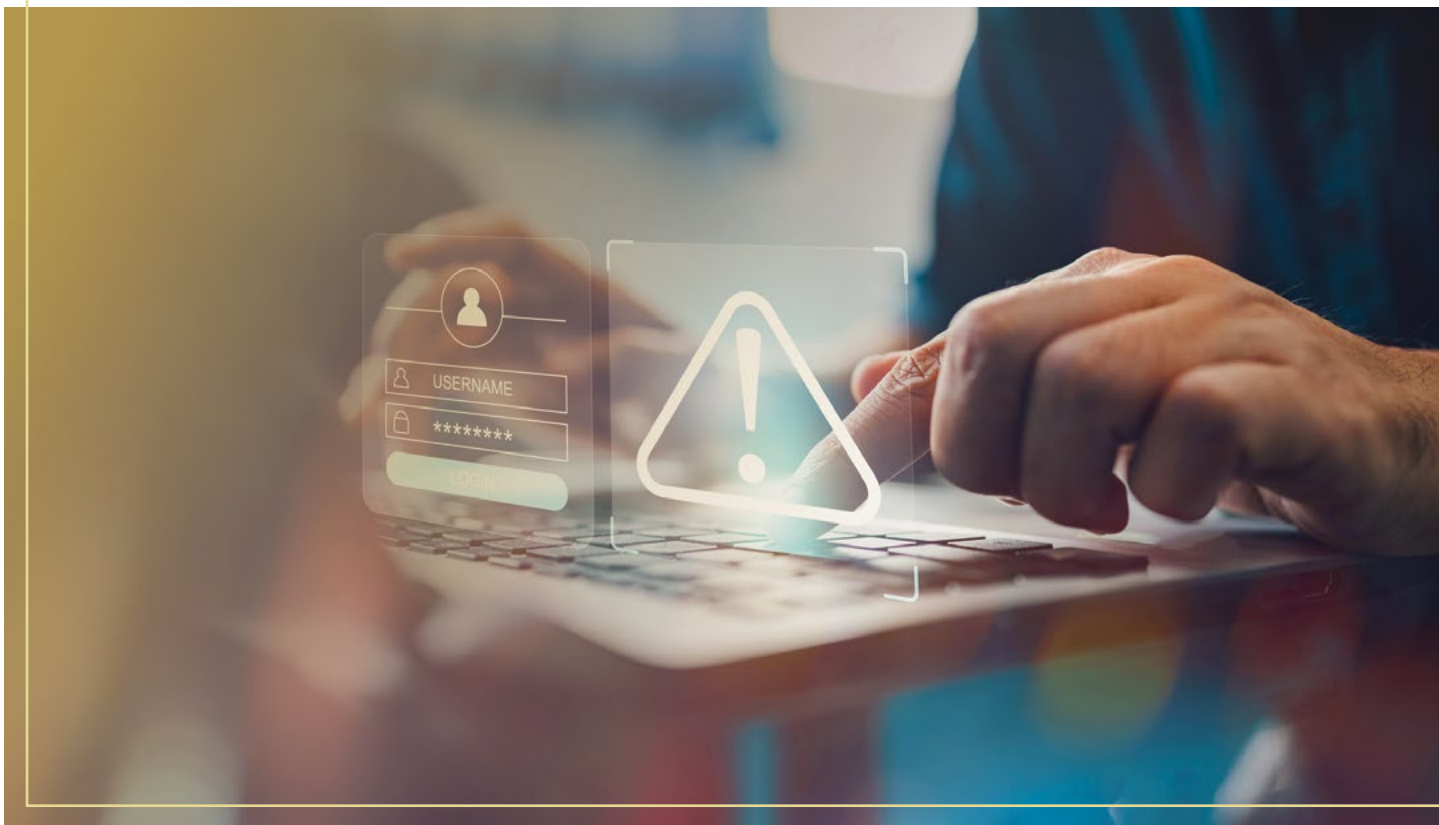
## Creating Alliances

Stop Scams Alliance conducted targeted outreach to identify allies in the key sectors affected in the scam chain: internet platforms, telecommunications carriers, and banks and other financial institutions. Presentations and colloquies at conferences created dozens of inquiries from companies and professional associations seeking to specify their vulnerability in the scam chain and potential avenues for raising defenses.

Allying with like-minded companies, trade associations, and nonprofits is crucial to addressing a rapidly growing and complex threat. Stop Scams Alliance created 10 partnerships during its initial year and consults regularly with their leadership and experts. Our partners' willingness to share information and collaborate on solutions enhances our collective capabilities.



Stop Scams Alliance attends the opening meeting of the Aspen Institute National Task Force on Fraud and Scam Prevention.



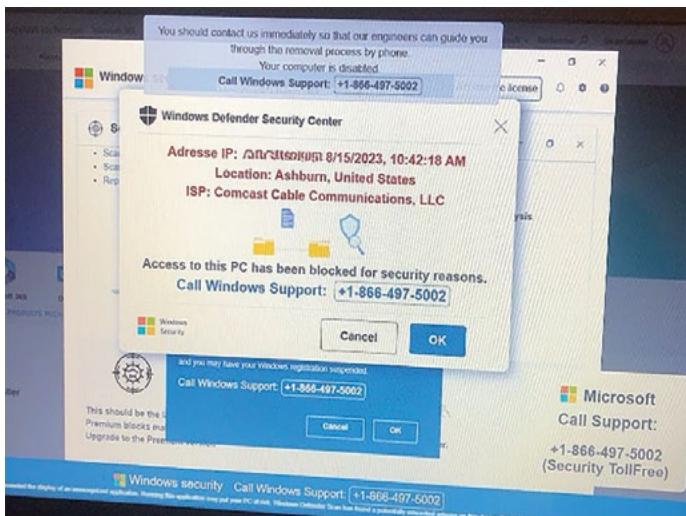


## Developing Solutions

Today, consumers cannot easily discern honest behavior in their internet activity from dishonest behavior. They can't tell a malicious link from a good one. They can't tell whether they are communicating with a trusted company or a hacker. To prevent the scourge of impersonation scams, we need to provide trusted and authenticated communications via the Internet, phone, and text.

Stop Scams Alliance works to find workable solutions to interfere with the ability of scammers to communicate with victims, including:

- A national capability to quickly take down **fraudulent investment websites**.
- A national capability to quickly take down **phishing websites** and **hyperlinks**.
- Blocking fraudulent investment **advertisements**.
- Blocking spoofed **phone calls** and **text messages**.
- Authentication measures to prevent criminals from impersonating the names of legitimate companies via **text messages**.
- Authentication measures to allow consumers to confirm whether they are receiving a **phone call** from a legitimate business.
- Measures to improve authentication of **financial accounts**, including stronger authentication for opening accounts and transfers, stricter identity validation standards, and reducing overreliance on SMS-based one-time passwords (OTPs) for authentication.
- Combating “tech support scams,” which impersonate legitimate support services to deceive users into providing sensitive information or making payments for non-existent issues.



Example of the “tech support” scam, the #1 scam affecting people over the age of 60 in the United States, measured by number of victims reporting to the FBI

## Looking Ahead

Our efforts to spark and support collaborative action across the US will be a principal focus in 2025.

- We will work with government leaders to create a national strategy to combat the rapidly rising scourge of scams.
- We will also work with the private sector on industry-leading solutions to interfere with the ability of scammers to impersonate respected companies and organizations.
- We will especially work to combat the out-of-control “Tech support scams” which are the number one fraud threat to people over the age of 60 in the United States.

## Call to Action

How can you help?

- Please support our mission by donating to Stop Scams Alliance. Visit [www.StopScamsAlliance.org](http://www.StopScamsAlliance.org)
- To advance our mission, Stop Scams Alliance needs researchers, grant writers, and administrative personnel.
- Write your Congressman. Ask the Congress to develop a strategy for combating the scourge of scams.

### Stop Scams Alliance

[www.StopScamsAlliance.org](http://www.StopScamsAlliance.org)

1457 Beulah Road, Vienna, Virginia 22182

**Stop Scams Alliance Inc. is a nonprofit, tax-exempt charitable organization (tax ID number 93-3456513) under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.**

## Donor Recognition

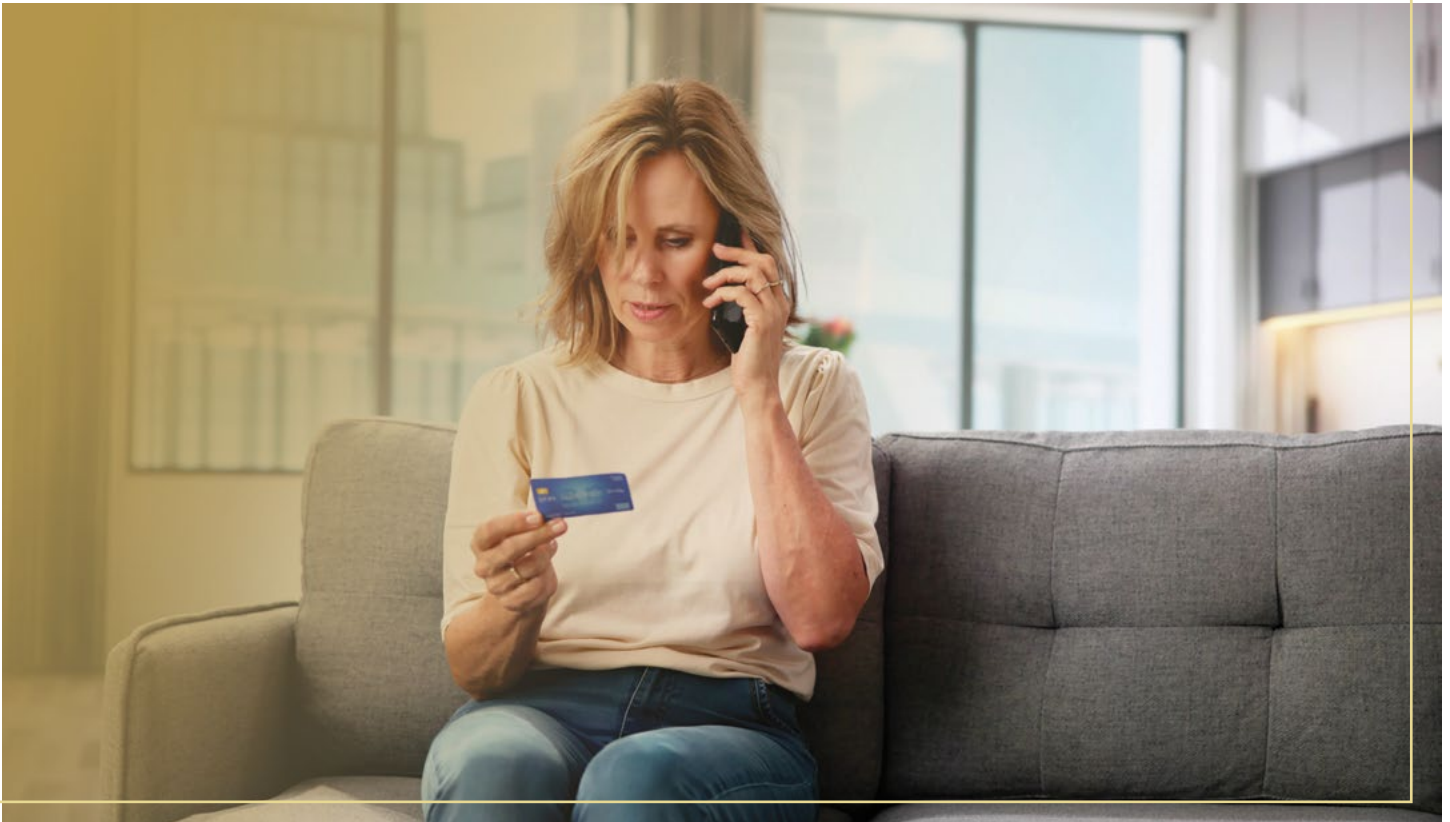
Stop Scams Alliance is pleased to receive support from two founding members in 2024:

- **Will J. Reid Foundation**, a private foundation that seeks to ensure a wise and durable world by supporting people and programs offering creative solutions to long-term problems.
- **EagleTrace**, a company that specializes in AI-enabled fraud detection and management for financial institutions.

Their contributions allowed the travel necessary to meet government and industry experts from around the world and learn from their research and their anti-scam efforts. We thank them for their confidence in us and their continuing support of our work.

Stop Scams Alliance is extremely grateful for the many individual contributors who helped make our work possible this year. We also thank family and friends who have served as sounding boards and have amplified our message.

*Will J. Reid Foundation*



# Our Team

Stop Scams Alliance is fortunate to have an active and expert Board of Directors who together comprise a large part of our value proposition. They embody the alliance the organization wants to create across government and industry boundaries. Their expertise, their years of leadership experience, and their networks contributed significantly to Stop Scams Alliance's achievements during its founding year.

## Our Founder and CEO

### **Ken Westbrook**

Former US Intelligence Community executive; expertise in information management and sharing

## Our Board

We are proud of our board members' decades of experience running large government programs. Their CEO, CIO, CTO, or equivalent experience furthers our ability as a leadership team to advance credible information sharing and technical countermeasures to combat the scam threat.

### **Gwyn Whittaker, Board Chair**

Entrepreneur; Founder & CEO of Mosaic, Inc., an IT strategy and solutions provider to the IC

### **Dr. David A. Bray**

CEO, LeadDoAdapt (LDA) Ventures; Former CIO of the Federal Communications Commission

### **Jonathan Frost**

Founder, Vox Veritas Vita Consulting; Former Director of Technical Collaborations of Stop Scams UK and City of London Police

### **Bob Gourley**

Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of OODA LLC; former CTO of the US Defense Intelligence Agency

### **Arnold Jackson**

CEO, AJ Management Consulting LLC; former Associate Director for Decennial Census, US Census Bureau, former CIO of the Census Bureau

### **David P. Mansdoerfer**

Owner and Managing Director, DPM & Associates; former Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health, US Department of Health and Human Services

### **Peter D. Rich**

Founding Partner, Rich Feuer Anderson; former Chief of Governmental Affairs, Reuters America

### **Russ Travers**

Former White House Deputy Homeland Security Advisor

## Our Advisors

**Robert Bigman**, global cybersecurity consultant and former CISO, US Central Intelligence Agency

**Eric Burger**, Research Director, Commonwealth Cyber Initiative. Former Assistant Director for Telecommunications and Cybersecurity at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and CTO of the FCC.

**Randall Fort**, former Assistant Secretary of Intelligence & Research, US Department of State

**Bill Harlow**, public relations specialist and former spokesperson for the White House and the Central Intelligence Agency

**Matt LaVigna**, Present and CEO, National Cyber-Forensics and Training Alliance

**Chris Olson**, Co-Founder and CEO, The Media Trust

**Scott Pirrello**, Deputy Assistant Attorney/Head of Elder Abuse Prosecutions, San Diego District Attorney's Office

**Lynda Webster**, Founder and Chair of The Webster Group

## Our Volunteers

**Maria Geroukos**, Intern, Georgetown University

**Farid Hakemi**

**Asmaa Latifi**, Intern, Pepperdine University

**Walker Rich**, Intern, University of Virginia

**Jonathan Lowenthal**, Intern, University of Virginia

## Our Partners

We salute our partners in the fight to protect consumers from the growing scourge of fraud:









[stopscamsalliance.org](https://stopscamsalliance.org)



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