



# Stopping Grinch Bots

## 119<sup>th</sup> Congress

**Lead Sponsors:** Rep. Paul D. Tonko (D-NY) and Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

*"Allowing grinch bots to rig prices and squeeze consumers during the holiday season hurts American families, small business owners, product makers and entrepreneurs."*

❖ **Paul Tonko**

## Bots ruin the holidays for U.S. families

- Since the days of **Tickle Me Elmo**, the holiday season has brought trending toys and the hopes of parents searching for the one gift their kid wants most. Grinch Bots put that hope out of reach
- **Bots are self-running programs that track and buy inventory online.** In a matter of seconds, 3rd-party vendors can use them to **buy up trending items until they are out of stock**
  - Popular items are sold out at major retail stores, allowing 3rd-party vendors to corner the market & charge vastly more
  - One of the year's most popular toys, Labubu's, which on average retail for around \$20-30, are being sold at resale for hundreds and even thousands of dollars
- Retailors have tried instituting control measures, but rogue programmers continue to game the system and flip trending products or services at significantly marked-up prices

## Digital commerce & AI fuel the problem

- Cyber Monday 2025 once again broke records, with Americans spending an estimated **\$13.9-\$14.2 billion**, a ~4.5% increase from 2024
- According to reports, **roughly HALF of all retail web traffic** now comes from bots
- In a 6-month study retail websites face **over half a million automated attacks per day**
- Bots are rapidly evolving, using residential IP addresses or deploying **AI to solve security measures like CAPTCHAs**
- In 2016, **Congressman Tonko's related Better Online Ticket Sales (BOTS) Act** was signed into law by President Obama to ban "ticket bots" that intentionally bypass security measures on online ticketing websites to unfairly outprice individual fans
- The **Stopping Grinch Bots Act of 2025** would apply the structure of the BOTS Act to e-commerce sites, to ban bots bypassing security measures on online retail sites

## Congress must protect consumers!

### The Stopping Grinch Bots Act of 2025

**Endorsed by:** Consumer Reports, Consumer Federation of America, National Consumers League

1. Prohibits manipulative work arounds that allow bad actors to use bots to circumvent control measures designed to protect real consumers
2. Makes it illegal to knowingly circumvent a security measure, access control system, or other technological control or measure on an Internet website or online service to maintain the integrity of posted online purchasing order rules for products or services, including toys, and would make it illegal to sell or offer to sell any product or service obtained in this manner
3. Allows the Federal Trade Commission to treat these abusive workarounds as prohibited unfair or deceptive acts or practices and take action against the bad actors

Connect with Congressman Paul Tonko on Facebook, X, Bluesky or Instagram: @RepPaulTonko