REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI
AT THE FINAL MEETING OF THE ROBOCALL STRIKE FORCE

WASHINGTON, DC

OCTOBER 26, 2016

Americans are suffering from a scourge of robocalls. Each and every year, robocalls are the number one complaint at the FCC—and the FTC expects to receive over 5 million robocall complaints this year alone. And it's no wonder: According to Hiya, an industry-leading robocall-blocking company, Americans received 984 million robocalls on their cellphones in September alone. That's 4.5 robocalls for every mobile phone in the United States.

That's why the work of the industry, including those participating in the Robocall Strike Force, is so important.

But thanks to the work of the industry's Robocall Strike Force, things may get a little better.

Take, for example, the problem of illegitimate Caller ID spoofing. As I said when at the launch of this strike force, spoofing is a, if not *the*, critical input that enables robocalling. Scammers and spammers using spoofing to disguise their identity, to trick consumers into answering unwanted calls, and to hide from authorities.

The Alliance for Telecommunications Industry Solutions (ATIS), the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) Forum, and the Internet Engineer Task Force's Secure Telephone Identity Revisited Working Group (IETF STIR WG) have been developing standards to combat spoofing. That work has been on hyperdrive recently thanks to Strike Force's Authentication Work Group. And I want to specifically recognize the co-chairs of that group—Chris Wendt of Comcast and Martin Dolly of AT&T—for their tireless efforts to get this done right and right now. I hope the industry will carry your gusto into implementing the SHAKEN and STIR frameworks so that this widespread spoofing fraud and can be soon eliminated.

Or consider the problem facing a telephone company that wants to provide call-blocking services to their customers. Back in August, I pushed for the Commission to carve out a safe harbor for such companies so they could experiment with new call-blocking solutions. The Strike Force's Regulatory Support/Root Cause Removal Work Group took up the challenge and got our Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau to create a safe harbor to block calls when instructed by the subscriber of the spoofed number. With that one, small change, the Detection, Assessment, Traceback, and Mitigation Work Group was able to conduct a Do-Not-Originate Trial with the IRS, reducing complaints about IRS scam calls by about 90% in the third quarter of 2016.

These are real results, and every participant in the Robocall Strike Force should be proud of what's already been accomplished.

And of course, there is much, much more to do. And that means real action by the FCC itself, not the industry.

The FCC must move forward with designating a governance authority and Telephone Authority Administrator so that the certification process envisioned by the STIR/SHAKEN framework can get underway. The FCC must expand the safe harbor for call-blocking—at least to cover unassigned numbers and illegal robocalls—so that carriers aren't threatened with litigation for doing the right thing by consumers. The FCC must make it easier for consumers to tell us about the robocalls they receive and start taking aggressive action against unscrupulous telemarketers and known robocallers. And the FCC must grant the petition of 51 consumer-advocacy organizations to overturn the FCC-created loophole for federal contractors in our robocalling rules.

I hope that everyone here—government officials, industry representatives, consumers, and others—can rally around the purpose I've outlined this morning. And, to borrow from former President Kennedy: Let every robocaller know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any solution, and oppose any bot to assure the survival and the peace of American consumers.