

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

Re: *Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls*, CG Docket No. 17-59

The phone rings. You pick it up. You naturally say hello. Then you hear a seemingly benign question: “Can you hear me?” Instinctively you answer in the affirmative, since you actually heard the question, but with that “yes” response, trouble potentially begins for you.

According to reports, this is precisely how so many of our citizens have been scammed in recent months. Without their knowledge, intent or actual consent, unsuspecting consumers are signed up for various products and services, such as a home alarm system or a cruise because they answered yes to an unrelated question.

According to the Better Business Bureau, 65 percent of reports received by their “Scam Tracker” during the last few days of January were related to this specific scam. And just who is behind this scam? Where are these calls originating? Why is the Do Not Call list not being honored? Answering these questions has proven harder than one may think, especially when robocalls appear to originate from an unassigned or invalid telephone number.

Last August, at the Commission’s urging, more than 30 companies came together to launch a Robocall Strike Force. Sixty days later, the group delivered a series of recommendations aimed at putting a stop to illegal and unwanted robocalls. Among the report’s many recommendations was for the Commission to provide “guidance on regulatory rules to facilitate identifying and stopping robocalls from reaching the consumer.”

Today’s NPRM and NOI are a step in that right direction. By proposing rules expressly allowing providers to automatically block calls originating from unassigned or invalid numbers, the NPRM targets calls that are most likely established to defraud and harm consumers. But the NOI goes a step further by asking questions about objective criteria for identifying calls where there is a sufficiently high degree of certainty that the call is illegal.

Illegal robocalls are no longer just a dinner table annoyance. According to a study released in December by CPR Call Blocker, 13 percent of U.S. adults have been a victim telephone scams. Nearly half of those scammed lost between \$100 and \$10,000, so these phone scams have real economic consequences for American households. This calls for a multi-pronged, high-powered approach that includes tough enforcement of our rules; a commitment by industry to implement better call blocking technologies; and technology that empowers consumers with the means to decide which calls should be blocked, particularly those calls that may be unwanted but not necessarily illegal.

According to the YouMail Robocall Index, 2.2 billion robocalls were placed nationwide in February of this year alone. Similarly, during the second half of 2016, 43 percent of complaints filed with the FCC’s consumer help center were related to robocalls. I would like nothing more than to report following the completion of this rulemaking that illegal and unwanted robocalls had been curtailed by a sizeable percentage.

Given the increasing sophistication of robocall scammers, I know this is a tall order, but we should try and try we will. With a sustained focus and deep commitment by government and industry, I am optimistic that we have the ability to make a real dent in the problem because none of us should have to think twice when we hear the words “can you hear me.”

My thanks as always to the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, including Mark Stone, Micah Caldwell, Kurt Schroeder, John Adams and Jerusha Burnett. Your continued focus on stopping illegal and unwanted robocalls has my appreciation and that of the American people.