

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI
AT THE FCC-FTC POLICY FORUM:
“FIGHTING THE SCOURGE OF ILLEGAL ROBOCALLS”**

WASHINGTON, DC

MARCH 23, 2018

Good morning, and welcome to the FCC. Thank you all for coming. Special thanks to our co-hosts, the team from the FTC, and their fearless leader, Acting Chairwoman Maureen Ohlhausen—who I understand will not be able to join us today in person but will appear by video. And thank you to my colleagues Mignon Clyburn and Brendan Carr for taking the time to be here and speak this morning.

This cross-agency event reflects the importance of the issue of unwanted robocalls. For years, this has generated the most consumer complaints to the FCC, and the FTC has gotten a lot of public feedback about it as well.

Today’s collaboration brings together not only the FCC and the FTC, but also other leaders in government, the private sector, and the non-profit community. It’s a group effort, one that is necessary and appropriate to tackle this issue. It evokes in my mind Ben Franklin’s famous quote upon the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776: “We must, indeed, all hang together, or most assuredly we shall all hang separately.”

While perhaps less existential, the fight against robocalls requires similar unity. None of us will defeat this scourge alone. The unfortunate inventiveness of scammers, technical challenges, and sheer volume of calls are daunting for any one entity to defeat. But working together, we have a better chance.

Here at the FCC, combatting illegal robocalls is our consumer protection priority, and we’ve taken multiple steps over the past year to advance that priority.

For instance, last November, the FCC empowered phone companies to block calls from spoofed phone numbers that do not or cannot actually originate calls—such as invalid or unassigned numbers. This allows phone companies to block many scam calls before they even get to consumers.

Additionally, we’re seeking public input on ways to help authenticate caller ID information. This would essentially give each phone number a verified digital fingerprint that would give every call recipient confidence to answer, knowing a legitimate caller was on the line.

And just yesterday, the FCC launched an initiative to explore the creation of a database for reassigned phone numbers, a measure that would help reduce unwanted calls to consumers.

The FCC’s focus hasn’t been limited to the rulemaking side of the ledger. Aggressive enforcement has also been a key component of our strategy. We’ve sent a very clear message that those who engage in illegal robocall schemes will pay a price—literally. In 2017, the FCC proposed over \$200 million in fines against illegal robocallers. I also personally have raised the issue with foreign counterparts to enable our governments to share information necessary to crack down on organized robocall operations.

But we know that all this isn’t enough. That’s why we’ve teamed up with the FTC, consumer advocates, and the private sector to convene this policy forum. We’re looking to you for guidance on the steps we’ve already taken and possible new avenues for action.

I should note as well that this event won’t be a one-hit wonder. On April 23, the FCC and FTC will be co-hosting a Technology Expo that will feature technologies, devices, and applications to minimize or eliminate the number of robocalls consumers receive. The Expo will be held at the Pepco Edison Place Gallery here in D.C. We hope you’ll be able to attend.

Thanks again for joining us today. Looking at the talent in this room, I know this is going to be an engaging and productive day. At the end of it—to borrow once more from Franklin—I know that we'll hang together in this fight.

With that, I'll turn it back to Patrick.