

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls*, CG Docket No. 17-59, *Call Authentication Trust Anchor*, WC Docket No. 17-97

In the three weeks since I announced that the FCC would be voting on my proposal to allow telephone companies to block unwanted robocalls by default, I've heard from many Americans across the country. Here is a sampling of what they've had to say.

"I read with great delight in the [*Wall Street Journal*] today that you are proposing to allow [carriers] to analyze network traffic to spot and block certain robocalls. Please, please, please do so. I am retired and have been on the do not call list for years. I get at least 5 spam calls per day or telemarketer calls. I have stopped answering my telephone unless the caller name is displayed."

"Please respect the wishes of a vast majority of citizens who wish to free their lives from automatic robot calling. Stop robocalls!"

"I was so happy to hear about your plan to allow carriers to block the robo calls [sic]. I have been so depressed because I feel these robocalls have absconded with my expensive iPhone. There is simply no rest from these calls"

"I just read today's *Wall Street Journal* article about your plan to block robocalls and I support it. I get two or three robocalls per day. It has to be stopped. Please move ahead as soon as possible."

"I received over 500 robocalls from the end of February until the end of March of this year from so-called Health Insurance. These calls ALL came from SPOOFED phone numbers. Why would any legitimate company have to spoof their phone number to try to solicit business? The calls slowed down for a few weeks but are now kicking up again. Today I have received 8 calls with no voice mails. I now have to put my phone on Do Not Disturb so I can get some peace. . . . You will be my hero and I dare say millions of other Americans if you actually put an end to this harassment."

"[D]o not side with the businesses that want to harass our fellow citizens. We are getting international and domestic robo calls [sic] at all hours of the day including the early AM hours from countries like Lithuania. This needs to stop."

These voices are representative of what I hear when I travel across the United States. If there is one thing in our country right now that unites Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, socialists and libertarians, vegetarians and carnivores, Ohio State and Michigan fans, it is that they are sick and tired of being bombarded by unwanted robocalls.

And my message to the American people today is simple: We hear you and we are on your side.

Since the beginning of 2017, fighting illegal robocalls has been the FCC's top consumer protection priority. In the last two years, for example, we've expressly authorized phone companies to block certain categories of calls that are highly likely to be illegal, such as calls purporting to originate from unassigned, unallocated, or invalid numbers. We've taken steps to address the problem of unwanted calls to reassigned numbers by authorizing the creation of a reassigned numbers database. We've taken strong enforcement action against illegal robocallers, imposing or proposing almost a quarter-billion dollars in forfeitures against callers for illegal, spoofed calls. And we've demanded that industry develop and implement by the end of the year Caller ID authentication—a critical component in the fight against illegal Caller ID spoofing.

But there isn't a silver bullet to solving the problem of unwanted robocalls. So today, we take additional steps as part of our comprehensive strategy to combat this scourge.

Most importantly, we clarify that phone companies may immediately start offering call-blocking programs by default, based on any reasonable analytics designed to identify unwanted calls, so long as consumers are given the choice to opt out. There are many tools available right now that are effective in blocking unwanted calls before they reach consumers. But their deployment has been limited because they're only being made available on an opt-in basis, and many of the consumers who would most benefit from these tools, such as elderly Americans, are unaware that they can opt in. We believe today's clarification will make it easier for consumers to participate in and benefit from call-blocking programs. We also want to ensure that consumers can make an informed decision whether to remain in a call-blocking program or not. That's why we are requiring providers to clearly disclose to their customers what types of calls may be blocked and the potential risks of blocking wanted calls, while providing them with an opt-out mechanism.

We also clarify that providers may allow consumers to opt in to more aggressive blocking services. Specifically, carriers can permit consumers to use their own smartphones' contact lists as a "white list," and block calls not included on that list.

I'm optimistic that all of these measures will meaningfully reduce the number of unwanted robocalls that Americans get.

Of course, I recognize that not everyone is a fan of our approach. Some opponents themselves are subjecting consumers to a torrent of unwanted robocalls. My message to them is simple: The FCC will stand with American consumers, not with those who are badgering them with unwanted robocalls.

I also recognize that some who make legitimate calls have expressed concern about our decision today. But I believe that we've appropriately addressed their concerns by making clear that any reasonable call-blocking program offered by default must include a mechanism for allowing legitimate callers to register a complaint and for having that complaint resolved.

Turning to the *Third Further Notice*, we advance significant proposals related to the Caller ID authentication framework known as SHAKEN/STIR. SHAKEN/STIR will be critical in telling consumers whether the Caller ID information they see is real or spoofed. And it can be used to assist with blocking spoofed calls. That's why we're proposing a safe harbor for phone companies that choose to block calls that can't be authenticated under SHAKEN/STIR.

When it comes to the implementation of SHAKEN/STIR, I have made clear my expectation that major carriers will get this done by the end of the year. I believe that a voluntary, industry-led process is most likely to achieve this goal. And to date, I've been pleased by the progress that industry has made and am optimistic that the end-of-the year deadline will be met. But in case it isn't, the FCC will not hesitate to take regulatory action. That's why today, we're taking the necessary steps so that we will be in a position to take regulatory action early next year, should that be required.

In closing, I would like to express my thanks for my colleagues who offered edits during the last three weeks that have made this a better item. And I'd like to thank all of the Commission staff who worked so hard to bring the American people much-needed relief: from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, John B. Adams, Ed Bartholme, Jerusha Burnett, Greg Haledjian, Karen Schroeder, Kurt Schroeder, Mark Stone, Kristi Thornton, and Patrick Webre; from the Enforcement Bureau, Parul Desai and Kristi Thompson; from the Office of Communications Business Opportunities, Belford Lawson; from the Office of Economic Analytics, Eric Burger, Giulia McHenry, Chuck Needy, and Emily Talaga; from the Office of General Counsel, Malena Barzilai, Ashley Boizelle, Richard Mallen, Linda Oliver, and Bill Richardson; from the Office of Managing Director, Pete Renee; from the Public Safety and Homeland

Security Bureau, Ken Carlberg and Lauren Kravetz; and from the Wireline Competition Bureau, Pamela Arluk, Matthew Collins, Melissa Droller Kirkel, Justin Faulb, Heather Hendrickson, Lisa Hone, and Kris Monteith.

With today's vote, the Commission is taking a major step forward in the fight against unwanted robocalls. And now is the time for telephone companies to take the baton. I commend those carriers who have stepped up to the plate and already indicated that they will implement call-blocking services by default. And I encourage those who haven't already done so to listen to the American people and help to end this scourge.