



Geoffrey Starks
Commissioner

Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

June 10, 2019

John Donovan, CEO
AT&T Communications
208 S. Akard Street, Suite 2954
Dallas, TX 75202

Dear Mr. Donovan:

Robocalls have changed the fabric of our culture and, quite literally, broken phone service in this country. Just last month, consumers were bombarded with more than 4.7 billion of these calls. Last week, I joined my colleagues in adopting a *Declaratory Ruling and Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*¹ that clarified that your company can, without violating Commission rules, deploy a powerful new tool in the fight against illegal and unwanted robocalls – call blocking offered to consumers by default on an informed opt-out basis.

Our action has received enthusiastic support from the public and industry stakeholders, including many carriers.² I am also optimistic, and hope that our approach will empower the public by quickly making call blocking tools available to millions more consumers. While we may have disagreed on some of the details, my fellow Commissioners and I also uniformly agreed that call blocking services should be offered to consumers for free.

I write today, on the heels of our action, to seek information about your timeline for deploying and implementing these services. After all, carriers noted in our record that offering flexibility, as the Commission did, rather than implementing prescriptive rules and requirements, would be the best approach to ensuring that consumers are able to access these tools as quickly as possible.³ Accordingly, I am interested in learning more about your plans to make these services available to your consumers.

¹ *Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls; Call Authentication Trust Anchor*, CG Docket No. 17-59, WC Docket No. 17-97, Declaratory Ruling and Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. FCC 19-51 (June 7, 2019).

² See, e.g., David Shepardson, U.S. FCC makes it easier for phone companies to block ‘robocalls’, Reuters, June 6, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-fcc-robocalls/us-fcc-makes-it-easier-for-phone-companies-to-block-robocalls-idUSKCN1T725J>; Press Release, Matthew Gerst, CTIA statement on the FCC’s Clarification of the Commission’s Call-Blocking Rules (June 6, 2019), <https://www.ctia.org/news/ctia-statement-on-the-fccs-clarification-of-the-commissions-call-blocking-rules>; Press Release, USTelecom, USTelecom Statement on FCC Approval of Blocking Robocalls By Default (June 6, 2019), <https://www.ustelecom.org/ustelecom-statement-on-fcc-approval-of-robocall-blocking-by-default/>; Press Release, ACA Connects, ACA Connects Applauds FCC For Clarifying That Carriers May Offer Robocall Blocking Tools To Consumers On “Opt Out” Basis (June 6, 2019), <https://www.americancable.org/aca-connects-applauds-fcc-for-clarifying-that-carriers-may-offer-robocall-blocking-tools-to-consumers-on-opt-out-basis/>.

³ See, e.g., CTIA Comments, CG Docket No. 17-59, at 2 (rec. Sept. 24, 2018) (stating that regulatory flexibility is necessary to allow industry to address consumer demands in “creative and dynamic ways”); USTelecom Association Comments, CG Docket No. 17-59, at 6 (rec. July 20, 2018) (“flexibility ensures that illegal robocallers are faced with a dynamic and fluid carrier defensive posture that is further enhanced by deployment of more robust consumer tools and increased enforcement efforts”); American Cable Association Comments, CG Docket No. 17-59, at 4-6 (rec. Sept. 24, 2018) (stating that allowing providers flexibility will incentivize the deployment of call-blocking technology).

Please provide me with full responses to each of the following questions.

1. Indicate whether you will offer your customers default call blocking services on an informed opt-out basis and, if so, provide details of your plans to deploy these services, including a timeline for implementation.
2. Describe how you intend to inform consumers about this service.
3. Indicate whether you expect to act contrary to the Commission's clear expectations and nevertheless charge your customers for these services.
4. If you do not currently plan to offer customers default call blocking services on an informed opt-out basis, please explain why.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and I am grateful for any work you have already done on behalf of consumers and in consultation with the Commission to stem the tide of unwanted and illegal robocalls. I look forward to working together to make sure that we are doing absolutely everything that we can to protect consumers from deceptive and dangerous robocalls and empower them to be free from disruptive and unwanted calls.

Please send your response to me electronically to Geoffrey.Starks@fcc.gov no later than July 10, 2019. If you are not able to fully answer these questions as of the deadline, or if there are any material changes to your responses after submission, please notify my office immediately.

Regards,



Geoffrey Starks