

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Call Authentication Trust Anchor*, WC Docket No. 17-97; *Implementation of TRACED Act Section 6(a)—Knowledge of Customers by Entities with Access to Numbering Resources*, WC Docket No. 20-67.

Among the hundreds of millions of unwanted phone calls that Americans receive every day are “spoofed” calls. The caller spoofs or manipulates the caller ID information that appears on the recipient’s phone to trick him into thinking that the call is from someone he knows or can trust. These calls aren’t just a nuisance—they add up to billions of dollars lost to fraud, undermine consumer confidence in the phone network, and harm public safety.

The threat posed by these calls is particularly apparent now, with phone scammers preying on Americans’ fears during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. For example, Michigan’s Attorney General recently warned that “scammers are spoofing phone numbers of at least one local public health department and calling residents to offer medication” in an attempt to steal their Medicaid and Medicare information.¹ To make matters worse, because “[e]ssential local public health department phone lines are blowing up with questions about these calls,” officials “cannot make important phone calls out or receive incoming calls related to COVID-19.”² And in the past two weeks, utility companies from Maryland to California have warned about fraudsters spoofing their phone numbers and exploiting concerns about financial uncertainty during the pandemic, threatening to shut off service if customers don’t pay up.³

With this *Order*, we take a critical step forward to protect consumers from these and other spoofed robocalls: We require phone companies to implement strong, new caller ID authentication technology. Known as STIR/SHAKEN, this technology enables voice service providers to verify that the caller ID information transmitted with a particular call matches the caller’s number. Last year, I demanded that major phone companies voluntarily deploy STIR/SHAKEN, and a number of them did. But it’s clear that FCC action is needed to spur across-the-board deployment of this important technology. In today’s *Order*, we therefore mandate that all originating and terminating voice service providers implement the STIR/SHAKEN framework in the Internet Protocol (IP) portions of their network by June 30, 2021, a deadline that is consistent with the TRACED Act, which was recently passed by Congress.

Widespread implementation of STIR/SHAKEN will reduce the effectiveness of illegal spoofing, allow law enforcement to identify bad actors more easily, and help phone companies identify—and even block—calls with illegal spoofed caller ID information before those calls reach their subscribers. Most importantly, it will give consumers more peace of mind when they answer the phone.

In the accompanying *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, we propose giving small providers a one-year extension of our STIR/SHAKEN implementation deadline pursuant to the TRACED Act. We

¹ Press Release, State of Michigan, *AG Nessel: Scammers Are Spoofing Health Department Phone Numbers Seeking Medicaid, Medicare Information* (Mar. 19, 2020), <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/0,9753,7-406-98163-522279--,00.html>.

² Michigan Attorney General Consumer Alert, *Avoid Spoofed Calls from Local Public Health Departments* (Mar. 19, 2020), https://www.michigan.gov/ag/0,4534,7-359-81903_20942-522263--,00.html.

³ See Press Release, Delmarva Power, *Delmarva Power Warns Customers About Utility Scammers During COVID-19 Pandemic* (Mar. 26, 2020), <https://www.delmarva.com/News/Pages/DelmarvaPowerWarnsCustomersAboutUtilityScammersDuringCOVID19Pandemic.aspx>; Press Release, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, *PG&E to Customers: Beware of Scammers Taking Advantage of COVID-19 Fears – Among Other Scams, Perpetrators Using “Spoofing” Technique to Simulate PG&E Phone Numbers* (Mar. 19, 2020), https://www.pge.com/en/about/newsroom/newsdetails/index.page?title=20200319_pge_to_customers_beware_of_scammers_taking_advantage_of_covid-19_fears.

also seek public input on implementing other aspects of the TRACED Act, including requirements that voice service providers work toward deploying caller ID authentication in the non-IP parts of their networks.

To be clear, there's no silver bullet for the problem of spoofed robocalls. So we will continue our aggressive, multi-pronged approach to combatting it. Over the past three years alone, the FCC has issued hundreds of millions of dollars in fines for violations of our Truth in Caller ID rules; expanded those rules to reach foreign calls and text messages; enabled voice service providers to block certain clearly unlawful calls before they reach consumers' phones; clarified that voice service providers may offer call-blocking services by default; and called on the industry to "trace back" illegal spoofed calls and text messages to their original sources.

Finally, I'd like to thank Congress for their work in passing the TRACED Act and their leadership in the fight against malicious caller ID spoofing. And for their ongoing and outstanding work to protect Americans from the scourge of spoofed robocalls, I'd also like to thank the following Commission staff: Pam Arluk, Allison Baker, Annick Banoun, Matthew Collins, Lynne Engledow, Justin Faulb, CJ Ferraro, Victoria Goldberg, Heather Hendrickson, Lisa Hone, Daniel Kahn, Ed Krachmer, Albert Lewis, Kris Monteith, Terri Natoli, Jordan Reth, Mason Shefa, Gil Strobel, John Visclosky, and Suzanne Yelen of the Wireline Competition Bureau; Erin Boone, Monica DeLong, Stacy Ferraro, and Garnet Hanley of the Wireless Telecommunication Bureau; Kenneth Carlberg, Lauren Kravetz, and Nicole McGinnis of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau; Ed Bartholme, Jerusha Burnett, Aaron Garza, Karen Schroeder, Kurt Schroeder, Mark Stone, and Kristi Thornton of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; Lisa Gelb and Kristi Thompson of the Enforcement Bureau; Denise Coca and Jim Schlichting of the International Bureau; Patrick DeGraba, James Eisner, Kenneth Lynch, Chuck Needy, and Craig Stroup of the Office of Economics and Analytics; and Mike Carlson, Rick Mallen, Bill Richardson, and Derek Yeo of the Office of General Counsel.