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For Immediate Release

**FCC FINES TELE CIRCUIT \$4.1 MILLION FOR SWITCHING
CONSUMERS' PHONE CARRIERS AND ADDING CHARGES
WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION**

Consumer Complaints Prompted Investigation Into Phone Company

WASHINGTON, April 22, 2021—The Federal Communications Commission today fined Tele Circuit Network Corporation \$4,145,000 for switching consumers from their preferred carrier to Tele Circuit without permission and adding unauthorized charges to consumers' bills. These actions specifically harmed elderly and infirm consumers who, in some cases, were left without telephone service for extended periods of time while the company refused to reinstate service until the unauthorized charges were paid in full. Many Americans, especially senior citizens, low-income consumers, and citizens in rural areas, rely on local and long-distance calling services from landline phones to provide a critical link to safety services and their communities.

The FCC's Enforcement Bureau investigation—which was first prompted by consumer complaints—also found that Tele Circuit had deceptively marketed its services, including by falsely claiming that its telemarketing calls were from the consumer's current carrier. The telemarketers also discussed a fictitious government program for low-income individuals and senior citizens as a way to solicit consumer consent. Following such calls, the company switched consumers' local and long-distance service providers—often called slamming—and, in some cases, added unauthorized charges to the consumer's bill—often called cramming. Tele Circuit apparently disconnected local and long-distance service in some cases after not receiving payment for the unauthorized charges.

Consumers filed complaints with the FCC, state regulators, and the Better Business Bureau. A large percentage of the complaints came from low-income Americans and senior citizens or people filing complaints on behalf of their elderly or infirm relatives. As a result, the FCC began an investigation and [proposed](#) a fine in 2018. Today's action largely affirms the findings outlined in that proposed fine, including that the company failed to fully respond to formal inquiries from the Commission.

Action by the Commission April 22, 2021 by Forfeiture Order (FCC 21-40). Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel, Commissioners Carr, Starks, and Simington approving. Acting Chairwoman Rosenworcel and Commissioner Starks issuing separate statements.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).