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For Immediate Release

FCC CHAIRWOMAN PROPOSES NEW RULES TO BLOCK LIKELY ILLEGAL ROBOTEXTS

Rules Would Require Wireless Carriers to Block Texts from Illegitimate Numbers

WASHINGTON, February 22, 2023—FCC Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today proposed new rules to protect consumers from text messaging scams. The new rules, if adopted by a vote of the full Commission at its March Open Meeting, would require mobile service providers to block certain robotext messages that are highly likely to be illegal.

“Missing packages that don’t exist; confirmation of payments that didn’t happen; links to shady websites; and truncated ‘wrong number’ messages from strangers. These scam robotexts are a part of everyday life for too many of us,” said Chairwoman Rosenworcel. “I’m asking my colleagues to join me in adopting the first FCC rules to focus on shutting down scam texts. But we’re not stopping here. Because we are going to keep at it and develop more ways to take on this growing consumer threat.”

If adopted, the new rules would require blocking of text messages that purport to be from numbers on a Do-Not-Originate list. That means providers will block texts that purport to be from numbers for which the actual subscriber has said it does not send legitimate text messages, including government agencies and other well-known entities. It also includes blocking of texts carrying invalid, unallocated, or unused numbers. These texts are highly likely to be illegal and no consumer would want to receive them. A second rule would require each mobile wireless provider to make public a single point of contact for text senders.

The item proposes to require providers to block texts from upstream providers that are known to be transmitting illegal robotexts, once notified by the FCC. The proposals would also extend Do-Not-Call Registry protections (prohibiting marketing texts to registered numbers) to text messaging and close the lead generator loophole, which allows companies to use a single consumer consent to deliver robocalls and text messages from multiple – perhaps thousands – of marketers on subjects that may not be what the consumer had in mind.

Finally, the item would continue to take public comment on text authentication measures and other proposals to continue to fight illegal scam robotexts. The proposed Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will be on the agenda of the Commission’s next monthly meeting, on March 16, 2023. The text of the proposal will be available with the tentative agenda notice released tomorrow and available on the meeting’s webpage:

<https://www.fcc.gov/march-2023-open-commission-meeting>.

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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).