

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Call Authentication Trust Anchor*, WC Docket No. 17-97, Sixth Report and Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (March 16, 2023).

Our meetings, conversations, and even meals continue to be interrupted by robocalls. They remain the Commission's number one source of complaints, and something we have been working hard to stem, adopting five Report and Orders on STIR/SHAKEN so far. But, there's good news as we adopt the sixth Report and Order today. The Commission's efforts to deter robocalls and authenticate Caller ID are making a difference. According to a recent release from the Federal Trade Commission it received 1.8 million complaints about robocalls in 2022. But, that number decreased from 3.4 million complaints in 2021.¹ That is real progress. And I'm enthusiastic that it will continue.

STIR/SHAKEN works best by improving transparency and accountability among providers and consumers. So, today we strengthen both. We strengthen the transparency of our STIR/SHAKEN regime by closing one of the loopholes that allowed unauthenticated calls into the call path. Now, the first intermediate provider in the call path must authenticate a Session Initiation Protocol unauthenticated call directly received from an originating provider. Trusting that a caller's number is accurate is a necessity if we're going to eliminate this problem and this should stop unauthenticated calls as early as possible.

Separately, we improve accountability as well as transparency by strengthening the Robocall Mitigation Database. We require all providers, including intermediate providers and voice service providers that have yet to implement STIR/SHAKEN, to file detailed information and certifications in the Database and to take reasonable steps to mitigate robocall traffic. Simply put, the more providers that have to describe how they are meeting their obligations to take measures to prevent the origination of illegal calls in the Database, the better. If a carrier isn't doing enough, it is public. That transparency will directly lead to additional accountability, which will lead to fewer robocalls.

But, I think the most important part of today's item, and maybe my favorite as a former enforcement official, is what we do to strengthen our enforcement authorities. We ensure that providers follow our robocall blocking rules by setting a strong max forfeiture for each call for failure to block. We're talking real money on a per-call basis.

We also adopt rules to remove non-gateway intermediate providers from the Database for violating our rules, and we establish an expedited process to remove providers from the Database for facially deficient certifications. This is vital, because under our rules other voice service providers may not accept traffic from a voice service provider that is not in the Database. And last, we establish rules that impose strong consequences for repeat offenders of our robocall mitigation rules, including revoking their section 214 operating authority and taking such actions into consideration when owners and principals of these bad actors attempt to obtain FCC licenses or certifications going forward. This is common sense. We should not be giving bad actors another bite at the apple if they've shown their true colors. Having an FCC license, authorization, or certification is a privilege.

Ultimately, we've made good progress blunting the growth of robocalls, and I'm confident that these new requirements, and our significant and real improvements to our enforcement capabilities, will continue the trend. Thank you to the FCC staff that worked on this item. It has my approval.

¹ *FTC Releases Updated Do Not Call Registry Data Book; Impersonator Fraud Tops List of Consumer Complaints*, Federal Trade Commission, Nov. 21, 2022, Press Release, <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/news/press-releases/2022/11/ftc-releases-updated-do-not-call-registry-data-book-impersonator-fraud-tops-list-consumer-complaints>.