

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Robocalls*, CG Docket No. 17-59.

In 1996, the television show “The Simpsons” featured a plotline in which Homer Simpson finds a discarded autodialer, the AT-5000, in the trash. He uses it to place prerecorded calls to his fellow Springfield residents, telling them that they will obtain the secret to eternal happiness if they send one dollar to “Happy Dude.” In the end, Homer is caught by the police and directed to apologize to everyone he scammed—which he does via robocall. In his words: “If you can find it in your heart to forgive me, send one dollar to Sorry Dude.”

In envisioning the pervasive nature of unwanted robocalls, “The Simpsons” might once again have predicted the future. These intrusive calls have become a far too common nuisance for far too many Americans. That is why Congress passed the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) in the first place—to prevent unwanted robocalls while allowing for legitimate communications between businesses and consumers. The FCC has an important role to play in implementing Congress’s statutory scheme. But in 2015, the prior FCC exceeded the scope of its authority and reached a decision of “eye-popping sweep,” as a unanimous D.C. Circuit put it just last week in reversing significant parts of that decision.

Thankfully, this FCC has been endeavoring to shift course—we have elevated robocalls to our top enforcement priority, and we have already taken important steps to combat unlawful calls. With last week’s court decision, we now have additional clarity about the path ahead. One issue we can tackle is a better approach to dealing with reassigned numbers. This issue arises when a consumer gives a business permission to call them, but then their telephone number is subsequently reassigned to another consumer. The database ideas we put forward in this Notice can help reduce the number of those unwanted calls while ensuring that we are not targeting callers that are following best practices.

I want to thank my colleagues for their willingness to include several edits I requested to this item, including the addition of data detailing the scope of the reassigned numbers problem, as well as a clearer acknowledgement that carriers might not be tracking when phone numbers are reassigned. Additionally, we correctly ask about the technical and operational costs for carriers that would participate in a reassigned numbers database. Finally, I am glad that we are including “bigger picture” questions about how this Notice fits within the broader efforts the FCC is taking to combat robocalls and the potential impact of the D.C. Circuit’s decision on our next steps in this proceeding.

Thank you to the staff of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau for your hard work on this item. It has my support and I look forward to reviewing the record as it develops.