

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Targeting and Eliminating Unlawful Text Messages*, CG Docket No. 21-402; *Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991*, CG Docket No. 02-278; Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (March 16, 2023)

Texting is increasingly becoming Americans' preferred way to communicate.¹ But unfortunately, as we've seen before, the more popular a communications service is, the more it's targeted by spammers and bad actors. The rise of robotexts – unwanted or illegal text messages – means a similar rise in harm to consumers, in the form of phishing attacks, malware, and scams. And robotexts are different than robocalls. Recipients of a robocall have the ability to either pick up the phone or not. But on most devices, recipients of a robotext see at least some of an unwanted message immediately, exposing them – and potentially luring them into – harm.

And you know as well as I do that we've been getting more of these unwanted texts. In 2022, Americans received over 225 billion robotexts – a 157 percent year-over-year increase, and a 307 percent increase from 2020.² Last month, February 2023, 10.7 billion spam texts were reported – nearly 39 for every person in the United States.³ Given this growth, failure to act could lead to robotexting to become so pervasive that it negatively affects texting, just as robocalls have done for phone calls. I can confidently say that's the last thing we want.

It is time for the Commission to act. We build upon our experience combatting robocalls, and today move to protect consumers from the threat of illegal or harmful robotexts. Industry has taken impressive steps on its own, but more needs to be done. The item we adopt today will require providers, at the network level, to take important steps to stop robotexts before they reach consumers. Adopting mandatory blocking of texts that are highly likely to be illegal based on a Do-Not-Originate list based on invalid, unallocated, or unused numbers is a reasonable first step to stem the flow of these texts. At the same time, we require providers to adopt a single point of contact for texters to report erroneously blocked messages, to balance the needs of industry and consumers. And finally, we recognize that this is just the first step, and seek additional comment on further proposals to protect consumers.

I will stay vigilant in pushing the Commission to do all it can to eliminate these illegal and unwanted text messages going forward, especially at a time where we have seen the expansion of texting to 988 and as part of NG911. I thank the Commission staff who work on robocall and robotext issues – I know there are many – for their hard work. I approve.

¹ Aaron Weiche, *SURVEY: Texting Is The Preferred Way To Communicate*, Leadferno, <https://leadferno.com/blog/survey-texting-is-the-preferred-way-to-communicate> (last visited Mar. 14, 2023).

² Robokiller, *The Robokiller phone scam report: 2022 insights & analysis*, <https://www.robokiller.com/robokiller-2022-phone-scam-report> (last visited Mar. 14, 2023).

³ Robokiller, *2023 United States robotext trends*, <https://www.robokiller.com/spam-text-insights> (last visited Mar. 14, 2023).