Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Advanced Methods to Target and	)	CG Docket No. 17-59
Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls	)	
	)	
Consumer and Governmental Affairs	)	
Bureau Seeks Input for Report on	)	
Robocalling	)	

COMMENTS
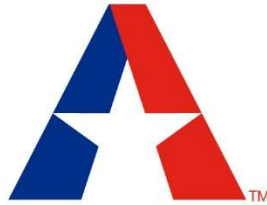
The American Cable Association ("ACA")[1] hereby provides comment to the

Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau (Bureau) on "the progress made by

industry, government, and consumers in combatting illegal robocalls, and the remaining

challenges to continuing these important efforts."[2] Robocalls are a big problem for

consumers. One study reports that American consumers received over 30 *billion*

---

[1] ACA represents approximately 750 smaller cable operators and other local providers of broadband Internet access, voice, and video programming services to residential and commercial customers. These providers pass approximately 18.2 million households of which 7 million are served.

[2] *See Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau Seeks Input for Report on Robocalling*, Public Notice, WC Docket No. 17-59, DA 18-638 (CGB rel. June 20, 2018) (Public Notice).

robocalls in 2017, making it the worst year on record, and the problem is only growing.[3]

Howevever, as discussed herein, ACA and its members are undertaking many efforts

along with others to help mitigate the problem.

As providers of voice services in communities throughout the nation, ACA

members know all-too-well the frustrations and harms that unwanted robocalls generate

for consumers. And as smaller providers who generally live within the communities they

serve, ACA members have not only a business incentive but a personal stake in

protecting their customers, who are friends and family, from the annoyance of excessive

robocalls and from predatory robocall scams.

ACA thus applauds Chairman Pai for identifying as his "top consumer protection

priority" the fight against unlawful robocalls and call spoofing.[4] Under his watch, the

Commission has shown its commitment to this fight through its aggressive crackdown

on robocall scams. Recent enforcement actions—including the $120 million fine

imposed on the mastermind of large-scale "neighbor spoofing" operation—should deter

others from hatching similar plans to defraud the public.[5] ACA appreciates that

---

[3] *See, e.g.*, Herb Weisbaum, *It's not just you - Americans received over 30 billion robocalls last year*, NBC News, January 17, 2018, *available at* https://www.nbcnews.com/business/consumer/it-s-not-just-you-americans-received-30-billion-robocalls-n838406 (last visited July 20, 2018); *see also* YouMail, www.robocallindex.com (reporting increases in the monthly volume of robocalls since the end of 2017) (last visited July 20, 2018).

[4] *See* Federal Communications Commission, The FCC's Push to Combat Robocalls and Spoofing, https://www.fcc.gov/about-fcc/fcc-initiatives/fccs-push-combat-robocalls-spoofing (last visited July 20, 2018).

[5] *See Adrian Abramovich, Marketing Strategy Leaders, Inc., and Marketing Leaders, Inc.,* Forfeiture Order, EB-TCD-15-00020488, FCC 18-58 (rel., May 10, 2018) (Abramovich Forfeiture Order); *see also Best Insurance Contracts, Inc., and Philip Roesel, dba Wilmington Insurance Quotes,* Notice of Apparent Liability*,* File No.: EB-TCD-16-00023195, DA 17-107 (rel. Aug. 4, 2017) (proposing an $82.1 million penalty for another major robocall scammer).

significant staff time and agency resources go into an action of this magnitude,[6] but the result in this case was a major victory for consumers. We encourage the Commission to continue to focus on enforcement actions. Chairman Pai and the Commisson also deserve praise for taking up several difficult aspects of the robocall problem in a number of regulatory proceedings. ACA has participated in the proceedings on call authentication and reassigned numbers, sharing its views on how to develop solutions that can be implemented by small and medium-sized providers.[7]

The communications industry has also made significant progress under the Commission's leadership to stem the tide of illegal and unwanted robocalls, working collaboratively both within the industry and with a broad array of stakeholder partners. ACA and its members are proud contributors to these efforts, and we are pleased to share our progress with the Bureau.

ACA has contributed to the development of consensus robocall solutions through its work on the Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC), the multi-stakeholder body chartered to advise the Commission on matters of "consumer protection and education."[8] ACA proudly serves on the CAC alongside consumer advocates, non-

---

[6] *See Adrian Abramovich, Marketing Strategy Leaders, Inc., and Marketing Leaders, Inc.,* Notice of Apparent Liability, EB-TCD-15-00020488, FCC 17-80, at Statement of Chairman Ajit Pai (rel., June 22, 2017) (noting, for instance, that the Enforcement Bureau's efforts in this matter included "hand-verif[ying] over 80,000 calls" suspected of being unlawful).

[7] *See* Comments of the American Cable Association on the Call Authentication NOI, WC Docket No. 17-97 (filed Aug. 14, 2017) (ACA Call Authentication NOI Comments); Comments of the American Cable Association on Reassigned Numbers, WC Docket No. 17-59 (filed June 7, 2018); Reply Comments of the American Cable Association on Reassigned Numbers, WC Docket No. 17-59 (filed July 9, 2018).

[8] *See Consumer Advisory Committee – Announcement of Renewal of Charter, Appointment of Members, Designation of Chairperson, Agenda, Date and Time of Next Meeting*, Public Notice, DA 16-1230 (rel. Oct. 31, 2016).

profit and government representatives, and other industry stakeholders. Unlawful

robocalls and spoofing are, quite appropriately, at the top of the CAC's agenda. During

its current term, the CAC has made recommendations to the Commission on ways to

promote consumer education about robocalls and streamline the complaint process[9]; to

enhance blocking of unwanted calls[10]; and to improve caller ID authentication.[11] The

CAC has outlined concrete steps to address these concerns, including specific call-

blocking recommendations the Commission has since adopted.[12] With the CAC charter

set to expire in October, ACA encourages the Commission to pursue a two-year

renewal so that the CAC can expand and build upon this work.

Another prominent area where industry has made significant progress is on

SHAKEN/STIR. The SHAKEN/STIR authentication framework is a promising tool for

protecting VoIP customers from caller ID spoofing through use of a digital certificate

scheme to authenticate calls.[13] SHAKEN/STIR reached a milestone in April with the

---

[9] *See* Federal Communications Commission, Consumer Advisory Committee, Recommendation of Consumer Advisory Committee Regarding Unwanted Calls, *available at* https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-advisory-committee (last visited July 20, 2018).

[10] *See* Federal Communications Commission, Consumer Advisory Committee, Recommendation Regarding Unwanted Call Blocking, https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-advisory-committee (last visited July 20, 2018).

[11] *See* Federal Communications Commission, Consumer Advisory Committee, Recommendation of Regarding Caller ID Authentication, https://www.fcc.gov/consumer-advisory-committee (last visited July 20, 2018).

[12] *See Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, WC Docket No. 17-59, 32 FCC Rcd 9706, n.3 (citing CAC's support for the rules being adopted in the order); *see also id*. at 9722, ¶ 47 ("We agree with the recommendation from the [CAC] and encourage providers to inform their customers about the features and risks of their own call blocking programs.").

[13] SHAKEN (Secure Handling of Asserted information using tokENS) and STIR (Secure Telephone Identity Revisited) comprise a framework for "verify[ing] and authenticat[ing] caller identification for calls carried over an Internet Protocol (IP) network using the Session Initiation Protocol (SIP)." *Call Authentication Trust Anchor*, WC Docket No. 17-97, Notice of Inquiry, 32 FCC Rcd 5988, 5989, ¶ 5

North American Numbering Council's release of a detailed plan for implementing

SHAKEN/STIR under a process of industry self-governance.[14] Chairman Pai expressed

support for the plan in May, proclaiming it "a substantial step forward for ensuring that

calls can be authenticated and verified."[15] Since then, ACA and its industry peers have

worked quickly to establish a Governance Authority and to lay the groundwork for the

selection of a Policy Administrator and the completion of other steps outlined in the

plan. As this work progresses, ACA will strive to ensure the framework is implemented

cost-effectively and in a manner that encourages participation from small and medium-

sized VoIP providers.[16]

In the meantime, ACA members of all sizes are using available tools to reduce

their customers' exposure to unwanted robocalls. For instance, ACA members

including WOW![17] and ALLO[18] employ a service from Metaswitch[19] that uses a

continuously updated database of blacklisted telephone numbers to screen and block

---

(2017) (Call Authentication NOI). The Call Authentication NOI describes and seeks comment on various aspects of implementing the SHAKEN/STIR framework. *See generally* Call Authentication NOI.

[14] *See* Federal Communications Commission, North American Numbering Council, Report on Selection of Governance Authority and Timely Deployment of SHAKEN/STIR, April 2018, *available at* https://go.usa.gov/xQQbU (last visited July 20, 2018).

[15] *See* Federal Communications Commission, Press Release, Chairman Pai Welcomes Call Authentication Recommendations from the North American Numbering Council (May 14, 2018).

[16] *See* ACA Call Authentication NOI Comments ((raising concerns about the cost and technical feasibility of implementing SHAKEN/STIR for small and medium-sized VoIP providers).

[17] WOW!, one of ACA's largest member companies, serves close to 800,000 subscribers in nine states. *See* WOW!, https://www.wowway.com/ (last visited July 20, 2018).

[18] Based in Nebraska, ALLO "provides communications services to over seven cities with more than 335,000 people." *See* ALLO, https://www.allocommunications.com/about/ (last visited July 20, 2018).

[19] Metaswitch is a "cloud native" communications software provider. *See* Metaswitch, https://www.metaswitch.com/about (last visited July 20, 2018).

unwanted robocalls.[20]   While there are costs to implement the service, ALLO offers it free of charge to its customers on an "opt-in" basis. ALLO was moved to provide this service after hearing from its customers on social media about their frustrations with excessive robocalls. New ALLO subscribers can opt in by clicking a "check box" during sign up, while existing customers can obtain the service upon request. WOW! is also interested in deploying the service broadly to its customers at no cost. However, the burdens involved in initiating the service on a customer-by-customer basis only after securing permission have impeded a broad rollout of the service. WOW! believes the vast majority of its customers would prefer to avoid the calls the Metaswitch service blocks, and hence a more streamlined deployment of the service across its subscriber base would be in line with customer preferences.[21]

There are also several ACA members, including SELCO[22] and RCN,[23] that have taken the necessary steps to make their networks compatible with Nomorobo, an unafilliated third-party service that uses a "simultaneous ring" feature to block robocalls after the first ring.[24] Customers sign up for this service directly with Nomorobo and then enable it through their carrier. SELCO, for instance, has implemented the ability for

---

[20] *See* Metaswitch, Robocall Blocking Service, https://www.metaswitch.com/solutions/fixed-line-solutions/robocall-blocking-service (last visited July 20, 2018).

[21] The Commission might consider addressing this "remaining challenge[]" by taking steps to allow providers to deploy robocall blocking services for their customers on an "opt-out" basis under appropriate circumstances. *See* Public Notice at 1.

[22] SELCO is a municipal provider of electricity and communications services in the town of Shrewsbury, Mass. *See* SELCO, http://www.selco.shrewsburyma.gov/ (last visited July 20, 2018).

[23] RCN provides residential and business services in and around New York City, Boston, Washington, D.C., Chicago, Philadelphia, and the Lehigh Valley. *See* RCN, https://www.rcn.com/hub/about-rcn/ (last visited July 20, 2018).

[24] *See* Nomorobo, www.nomorobo.com (last visited July 20, 2018).

customers to enable Nomorobo through an online portal on the SELCO website.[25] SELCO has found Nomorobo to be popular with its customers, in particular elderly customers who are often the most vulnerable targets of robocall schemes.

There is no doubt that unlawful and unwanted robocalls remain a major problem for the industry, the Commission, and consumers. However, with the sustained multiprong effort underway, the Commission and industry can and will continue to make progress in mitigating the problem. Small voice providers are part of the solution, as they are deploying existing tools to combat robocalls and working hard to develop new ones. ACA and its members stand committed to keep doing their part to deliver the right solutions for consumers.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew M. Polka	Brian D. Hurley
President and Chief Executive Officer	Vice President of Regulatory Affairs
American Cable Association	Ross J. Lieberman
Seven Parkway Center	Senior Vice President of Government Affairs
Suite 755	American Cable Association
Pittsburgh, PA 15220	2415 39th Place, NW
(412) 922-8300	Washington, DC 20007
	(202) 573-6247

July 20, 2018

---

[25] *See* Nomorobo, Nomorobo Set Up, https://nomorobo.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/115003734712-SELCO (instructions for SELCO customers to enable Nomorobo) (last visited July 20, 2018); *see also* SELCO, SELCO Help Desk, Telephone – User Guides and Documentation – Nomorobo, https://www.selcohelpdesk.com/nomorobo (guidance on signing up for Nomorobo through the Nomorobo website).