Consumer and Privacy Advocates Push FCC to Require VoIP Providers to Be Vigilant Against Illegal Robocallers

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On Thursday, the Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC) and the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC) on behalf of its low-income clients, submitted comprehensive comments urging the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to significantly increase the accountability of VoIP providers who allow robocallers to access the American telephony system. The proceeding, required by Section 6 of the TRACED Act, which passed Congress at the end of 2019, requires the Commission to determine how to ensure that “providers of voice service . . . know the identity of [their] customers.”

“The TRACED Act requires that VoIP providers know who their customers are and ensure that they are not using the provider’s networks to make illegal robocalls into our telephone system,” said Chris Frascella, a fellow at EPIC.

On behalf of consumers, EPIC and NCLC urged the FCC to implement the following:

1. Explicit guidance to providers on exactly what activities should be considered indicators of an illegal robocall operation.
2. The methods providers should be required to use to maximize their opportunities to spot these indicators of an illegal robocall operation.
3. Specific actions providers should be required to take once the indicators are apparent.
4. A clear statement that a provider will be suspended from access to telephone numbers and possibly permanently expelled from it, if it fails to a) use either the Commission’s proposed methods of spotting illegal robocall operations or a different but equally effective method, and b) shut down access to the callers conducting an illegal robocall operation, will lead to the suspension and possible permanent expulsion of the provider from the numbering system.
5. Greater transparency to consumers and to providers regarding sources of potential robocall threats.

These measures will help to fulfill the mandates of the TRACED Act in a way that supports providers and consumers alike. EPIC and NCLC call on the FCC to impose stringent requirements on VoIP providers to help stop the flood of unwanted and illegal robocalls.

“Given the ongoing invasion of robocalls to America’s telephones, a strong and comprehensive set of mandates imposed on these providers is clearly much needed,” said Margot Saunders, senior attorney at the National Consumer Law Center.

For more information, visit NCLC’s Robocalls & Telemarketing page.