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For Immediate Release

FCC CHAIRMAN PROPOSES MEASURES TO REDUCE UNWANTED ROBOCALLS AND SUPPORT BLOCKING OF SPAM ROBOTEXTS

FCC Will Consider Proposed Actions at the December Open Commission Meeting

WASHINGTON, November 20, 2018—Federal Communications Commission Chairman Ajit Pai today proposed measures to reduce unwanted robocalls and prevent spam text messaging. First, he is calling on his fellow Commissioners to approve a reassigned number database. This database would help legitimate callers know whether telephone numbers have been reassigned to somebody else before calling those numbers so they can direct their calls to parties who asked for them rather than individuals who have subsequently obtained those reassigned numbers. Second, he is proposing to make clear that wireless providers are authorized to take measures to stop unwanted text messaging through robotext-blocking, anti-spoofing measures, and other anti-spam features.

“Combatting robocalls is our top consumer protection priority, and these proposals are a significant step forward in that effort. Today, I am calling on the FCC to take additional measures to combat these calls and also to prevent a flood of spam robotexts from clogging Americans’ phones,” said Chairman Pai. “Americans rely on and trust text messaging. That’s why we need to act to prevent a deluge of spam texts and scam messages. I’m also proposing new rules to help reduce robocalls to reassigned numbers by creating a database that will help legitimate businesses stop calling those numbers. I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting these proposals and continuing our fight against unwanted robocalls and robotexts.”

The FCC will consider these items at its next Open Commission Meeting on December 12, 2018. The draft Declaratory Ruling on text messaging would formally rule that text-messaging services are information services, not telecommunications services, thus allowing carriers to continue using robotext-blocking and anti-spoofing measures to protect consumers from unwanted text messages. This Declaratory Ruling would rule on a 2015 petition from mass-texting provider Twilio and a 2007 petition from Public Knowledge. The reassigned numbers proposal would establish new rules in order to launch a database of reassigned numbers. This would help prevent accidental robocalls to numbers that are no longer assigned to consumers who signed up to receive those calls.

Robotexts appear to be a growing concern for American consumers, and the FCC is working to address them. State officials also have voiced concerns about scams and spam texts, with a bipartisan group of 20 state attorneys general asking the FCC not to disturb wireless carriers’ ability to combat unwanted spam messages.

Text messaging is a heavily-relied upon communications service. For instance, 58 percent of

teens with smartphones say that messaging is their primary way of keeping in touch with close friends. To ensure such texting services remain reliable and relatively spam-free, wireless messaging providers currently apply filtering to prevent large volumes of unwanted messaging traffic or to identify potentially harmful texts. As a result, the spam rate for SMS texts is estimated at 2.8 percent whereas the spam rate for email is estimated at over 50 percent. This Declaratory Ruling would maintain and strengthen the legal foundation for this consumer-friendly filtering and would empower blocking of likely spam. The reliability of text messaging can even have life-saving impacts: NENA: The 9-1-1 Association has expressed [concerns](#) about the possible impact of spam texting on consumer reliance on carrier-supported text messaging, which is used in text-to-9-1-1 services.

Calls to reassigned numbers can be a significant problem for those receiving the unwanted calls, those missing the calls they asked for, and for legitimate businesses making calls for which they have prior consent. Millions of phone numbers are reassigned each year and oftentimes consumers do not tell their contacts of the change. To prevent mistaken calls, the draft order would establish a single, comprehensive database of reassigned numbers based on information provided by phone companies that obtain North American Numbering Plan U.S. geographic numbers. After careful, deliberate consideration of the problem, it would also conclude this database would be the most efficient and cost-effective solution.

Robocalls and robotexts are limited by the Telephone Consumer Protection Act. The FCC has repeatedly established that text messages are considered a type of call under the law and thus must abide by all restrictions on robocalls to mobile phones. For information on the restrictions on robocalls and robotexts, visit www.fcc.gov/robocalls. In addition, manipulation of caller ID information – or spoofing – is limited by the Truth in Caller ID Act: <https://www.fcc.gov/spoofing>

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).