

## **FACT SHEET: CHAIRMAN PAI'S NEXT STEPS IN CURBING ILLEGAL ROBOCALLS: DEFAULT CALL BLOCKING SERVICES TO PROTECT CONSUMERS**

---

*On May 15, FCC Chairman Ajit Pai proposed steps to empower voice service providers to block illegal robocalls before they reach consumers' phones. The first part is a declaratory ruling, which, if adopted at the Commission's June meeting, would allow voice service providers to provide call-blocking services by default. The second part, a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, proposes a safe-harbor for call-blocking programs targeting potentially spoofed calls while still safeguarding critical calls.*

*With these steps, the FCC continues its multi-pronged strategy to curb illegal robocalls.*

### **Call Blocking for Consumers by Default**

Chairman Pai is taking action to empower phone companies to block robocalls by default. Through the proposed declaratory ruling, phone companies will be permitted to detect and analyze robocalls and block them from bombarding consumers' phones—similar to the way email providers block spam. Call blocking by default is an important distinction because many voice service providers offer call-blocking programs only on an opt-in basis. And as Consumers Union put it, “so few consumers opt-in to robocall blocking tools, yet continually express their frustration with the unending barrage of nuisance of calls.” Chairman Pai's declaratory ruling would make clear that voice service providers can offer call blocking tools by default to their customers—while giving consumers the choice to opt out. If this passes on June 6, voice service providers can start offering call-blocking services by default to reduce the number of robocalls that consumers receive.

Other key points:

- Voice service providers may offer opt-out call-blocking programs based on any reasonable analytics designed to identify unwanted calls and will have flexibility on how to dispose of those calls, such as sending straight to voicemail, alerting the customer of a robocall, or blocking the call altogether.
- Providers should clearly disclose to consumers what types of calls may be blocked.
- Voice service providers must provide sufficient information so that consumers can remain in the program or opt out.
- Call blocking should not in any way interfere with our country's emergency communications systems.

### **More Aggressive Blocking Tools by Opting In**

In addition to proactive call blocking, Chairman Pai's declaratory ruling would make clear that carriers can allow consumers to opt in to more aggressive blocking tools like those based on their own contact lists or other “white list” options. The declaratory ruling makes clear that carriers can permit consumers to use their own contact lists as a “white list,” blocking calls not included on that list. The white list could be updated automatically as consumers add and remove contacts from their smartphones.

### **Safe Harbor for Call-Blocking Programs Based on Potentially Spoofed Calls**

The Chairman is also proposing a safe harbor for providers that implement network-wide blocking of calls that fail caller authentication under the [SHAKEN/STIR framework](#) once it is implemented. The Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking also seeks comment on whether the FCC should create a safe harbor for blocking unsigned calls for particular groups of voice service providers—such as those known to facilitate illegal robocalls. It considers requiring voice service providers to maintain a “Critical Calls List” of numbers (such as emergency numbers) they may not block. These steps would be a powerful incentive for voice service providers to adopt the SHAKEN/STIR standards. These standards are expected to be implemented by large carriers later this year.