

Chairman Gary Palmer
Opening Statement - Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
“Stopping Illegal Robocalls and Robotexts: Progress, Challenges,
and Next Steps”
June 4, 2025

Good morning, and welcome to today’s hearing entitled “Stopping Illegal Robocalls and Robotexts: Progress, Challenges, and Next Steps.”

All of us have personal experiences with unwanted robocalls and robotexts. Some are merely annoying, but others have devastating consequences. For example, in March, the FCC warned consumers about scam robocalls targeting older Americans, and DOJ announced that it charged 25 individuals for participating in the same scam that defrauded Americans out of more than \$21 million in more than 40 states. The scammers made phone calls pretending to be an individual’s grandchild who needed money for “bail” after being “arrested,” or pretended to be the grandchild’s “attorney,” and were told they could not speak to anyone about the “arrest.” This is one of the many heartbreaking examples of scams perpetrated on Americans by illegal robocallers and bad actors.

According to recent estimates, in April 2025, nearly 2,000 robocalls were placed to U.S. consumers every second. Spam and scam calls make consumers feel threatened, fearful, and distrustful of legitimate callers. As more and more Americans ignore calls from unknown numbers, they miss important calls. Moreover, fraud perpetuated against Americans by illegal robocalls costs an average of \$25 billion annually, primarily affecting those who cannot afford such losses.

We are also seeing a lot of unwanted and scam robotexts, and AI generated phone calls and text messages, including voice clones and deepfakes. According to the FCC, consumer complaints about unwanted text messages increased 500-fold between 2015 and 2022. Americans are frustrated and understandably so.

In 2019, the bipartisan Pallone-Thune Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence—or TRACED Act—was enacted to help reduce the flood of illegal robocalls. The TRACED Act allowed the FCC and law enforcement to impose stricter penalties for intentional violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, or TCPA;

improved adoption of technical solutions, like the STIR/SHAKEN call authentication framework; and established a federal interagency working group to combat illegal robocalls.

As a result, U.S. telecommunications carriers have made progress implementing STIR/SHAKEN into their networks. This framework authenticates that phone calls are coming from legitimate phone numbers, which helps reduce the number of spoofed and illegal robocalls. Generally, to operate within the U.S., voice service providers must now implement robocall mitigation programs and file these plans and their STIR/SHAKEN compliance certifications in the Robocall Mitigation Database overseen by the FCC. Moreover, in July 2020, the FCC recognized the U.S. Telecom Industry Traceback Group (ITG) as the single registered consortium to conduct private-led traceback efforts that identify the source of an illegal robocall.

The FCC has also taken measures to address the growing burden of unwanted and scam robotexts and abused AI technologies. Specifically, in March 2023, the agency adopted regulations targeting scam robotexts. In addition, industry actors have partnered with federal agencies to

launch new programs, such as robotext tracing. Lastly, in August, the FCC proposed rules to protect consumers from AI-generated robocalls and robotexts. These are steps in the right direction, and I applaud the coordination we've seen thus far.

While the TCPA has provided many useful tools, the TCPA's private right of action has given rise to class-action lawsuits focused on minor infractions, rather than the bad actors responsible for placing illegal robocalls and it has not reduced the number of illegal robocalls or improved consumer protection.

In addition, STIR/SHAKEN implementation among smaller carriers has been delayed and bad actors have exploited these providers' reliance on legacy infrastructure. Moreover, a majority of illegal robocalls and robotexts originate overseas making them hard to trace. Because these bad actors are outside the jurisdiction of U.S. law enforcement, they are challenging to combat.

Finally, the FCC must grapple with emerging technologies and navigate the best way to create appropriate guardrails for these technologies while simultaneously continuing to support innovation.

We will always have robocalls and robotexts because not all of them are illegal. Many are used for legitimate purposes by U.S. businesses and public entities, but we must continue finding ways to combat these unwanted communications.

I want to thank our panel of witnesses for joining us. I look forward to a robust discussion to understand the current landscape of illegal robocalls and robotexts plaguing U.S. consumers and businesses so we can work together to identify and address remaining challenges.

I now recognize the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Ms. Clarke, for her opening statement.