

Illegal Robocalls

The Federal Trade Commission's recent "Operation Call it Quits" announcement, a major crackdown on illegal robocalls, recognized USTelecom's assistance in its efforts.

Robocalls are an automatic, computer-generated phone call made to your phone number (mobile or landline) from a solicitor. Legal robocalls can include doctor appointment reminders, surveys, school closing announcements, and political campaign calls while illegal robocalls range from dangerous phishing scams to unsolicited (and annoying) sales calls.

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Illegal robocalls are increasingly difficult to police due to mass-calling technology that can make thousands (even millions) of calls and the ability of bad actors to rapidly change tactics to avoid detection. Spoofing technologies allow scammers to disguise the origin of a phone call and appear as a legitimate caller. It is hard to detect these disguised calls since many call-blocking and labeling technologies rely upon the use of caller-ID information to categorize incoming calls.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO COMBATTING ILLEGAL ROBOCALLS

USTelecom is committed to working with government and industry stakeholders to ensure aggressive criminal enforcement against illegal robocallers and to provide call-blocking solutions to consumers.

- *Increased Criminal Enforcement* ► Most federal enforcement efforts are civil. There is an acute need for coordinated, targeted, and aggressive criminal enforcement of illegal robocallers at the federal level. U.S. Attorney offices should prioritize enforcement where federal statutes, such as the Truth in Caller ID Act or Wire Fraud statute are implicated, and should work closely with the FCC, FTC, and international partners in enforcement cases, particularly when the calls originate outside the U.S.
- *USTelecom's Industry Traceback Coalition* ► USTelecom leads the Industry Traceback Group (ITG), comprised of nearly 30 participants from across the broadband industry, that actively traces and identifies the source of illegal robocalls and coordinates with federal and state law enforcement agencies to bring perpetrators to justice.

The FCC's Enforcement Bureau Chief and Chief Technology Officer said ITG has reduced the amount of time necessary for the FCC to conduct traceback investigations "from months to weeks" and encouraged others to join our efforts.

- *Consumer Tools and Advanced Technologies* ► Industry is moving forward with the deployment of consumer tools to mitigate illegal robocalls and the SHAKEN and STIR standards to authenticate caller-ID. The number of apps available to consumers has increased from 85 in 2016, to 550 in 2018 – a 495% increase. More carriers are deploying services, including Verizon's 'Spam Alerts', AT&T's partnership with Hiya, and multiple providers offering 'one-click' installation of Nomorobo. All major providers started deploying the SHAKEN standard in 2018, and fuller deployment is expected in 2019.