



PRESS RELEASE

Attorney General Frosh Joins Fight to Stop Illegal Robocalls and Spoofing

Coalition of Attorneys General Asking the FCC to Allow Phone Companies to Do More to Block Illegal Robocalls – including Neighbor Spoofing

BALTIMORE, MD (October 10, 2018) – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh has joined a coalition of 34 attorneys general in calling on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to create new rules allowing telephone service providers to block illegal robocalls being made to unsuspecting consumers in Maryland and across the country.

New spoofing tactics used by scammers include “neighbor spoofing,” a technique that allows calls - no matter where they originate - to appear on a consumer’s caller ID as being made from a phone number that has the same local area code as the consumer. This manipulation of caller ID information increases the likelihood that the consumer will answer the call, and it is being utilized by scammers at an alarming and increasing rate.

“Illegal robocalls are not just an irritant, but are utilized by scammers to gain access to consumers’ personal information, especially from seniors and other vulnerable populations,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Scammers frequently change their tactics to find new ways to steal valuable personal information. The FCC must step up its efforts and allow telephone service providers to employ new technology to protect consumers.”

Last year the FCC granted phone service providers authority to block certain illegal spoofed robocalls. The coalition of attorneys general now seek added authority for the providers to work together to detect and block more illegal spoofed robocalls. “Spoofing” allows scammers to disguise their identities, making it difficult for law enforcement to bring them to justice. In [formal comments](#) to the FCC, the attorneys general write, “Virtually anyone can send millions of illegal robocalls and frustrate law enforcement with just a computer, inexpensive software, and an internet connection.”

In the letter to the FCC, the attorneys general express support for a new initiative which would give phone service providers the ability to authenticate legitimate calls and identify illegally spoofed calls and block them. To date, the FCC has not issued a notice of proposed rulemaking concerning additional provider-initiated call blocking. The added authority the attorneys general seek from the FCC is not in conflict with the national Do Not Call registry, in which consumers sign up to avoid receiving calls from certain legitimate vendors. The initiative for which the

attorneys general seek FCC approval concerns illegal robocalls, which are made to consumers regardless of whether or not they sign up for do-not-call lists.

Scammers using illegal robocalls have found ways to evade the FCC's Call Blocking Order of 2017. In 2017, the Federal Trade Commission received 4.5 million illegal robocall complaints - two and a half times more than in 2014. The Maryland Office of Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division receives numerous complaints each year with respect to illegal calls, including scam calls, telemarketing complaints, and robocalls.

The comments to the FCC were led by Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro and joined by the attorneys general of Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and the Hawaii Office of Consumer Protection.