

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Attorney General Racine Calls on Mobile Phone Carriers to Offer Call-Blocking to Customers

AG Joins Colleagues from 44 Other States in Letter to Five Major Phone Companies

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine today joined 44 other state attorneys general calling on five major phone companies to offer call-blocking technology to their customers. In a joint letter to the chief executives of the carriers, the attorneys general said a new Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule clarification allows telecommunication service providers to offer customers the ability to block unwanted calls and verifies that federal law does not prohibit offering the services.

In the letter to AT&T, Sprint, Verizon, T-Mobile and CenturyLink, the attorneys general stated, “Every year, our offices are flooded with consumer complaints pleading for a solution to stop intrusive robocalls. Your companies are now poised to offer your customers the help they need. We urge you to act without delay.”

“It is now crystal clear that these phone companies are able to provide consumers with the call-blocking capabilities they need to protect themselves from unwanted and annoying calls,” Attorney General Racine said. **“The companies should make these services available to their customers as soon as possible.”**

Phone companies had previously claimed they could not offer such services. At a July 2013 hearing before a Senate subcommittee, representatives from the U.S. Telecom Association and CTIA testified that “legal barriers prevent carriers from implementing advanced call-blocking technology to reduce the number of unwanted telemarketing calls.”

In their letter, the attorneys general noted that call-blocking options already exist for Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone service (NoMoRobo.com) and Android cell phones (Call Control). They said the phone carriers should move quickly to implement and inform their consumers of these options.

Last September, 39 attorneys general, led by Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller and Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster and joined by then-D.C. Attorney General Irvin B. Nathan, called on the FCC to allow phone companies to use call-blocking technologies. The FCC chairman endorsed the request in late May, and the FCC voted to pass the rule clarification on June 18.

In addition to Attorney General Racine, attorneys general from the following states signed today's letter: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

A copy of the letter is attached.

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