May 4, 2020

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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Pushing More Tools to Fight Robocalls Amid COVID-19

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody, along with a bipartisan coalition of 52 attorneys general, is urging USTelecom and its Industry Traceback Group to further develop robocall traceback and other tools suited for law enforcement in an effort to improve enforcement against illegal robocalls. USTelecom is the leading organization representing telecommunications providers. Attorney General Moody has been an active leader in fighting illegal robocalls by pressing Congress to pass stricter regulations, and most recently, warning Floridians about the increase of COVID-19 related robocalls.

The coalition sent a letter to USTelecom asking them to advance the Industry Traceback Group's abilities in identifying robocall campaigns, trends and business ecosystems; conducting automated traceback investigations; and coordinating with relevant law enforcement agencies. The ITG is an organization within USTelecom that traces the origins of illegal robocalls.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "We have seen an uptick in illegal robocalls during the COVID-19 pandemic, and these enhancements will allow us to more aggressively track, trace and investigate illegal robocall operations. Floridians must remain alert when answering robocalls, especially during this time of crisis.

"I am proud to stand with my fellow attorneys general to take quick action to thwart this illegal and unrelenting practice, as well as assist law enforcement by making sure they have the best capabilities to combat these illegal operations."

Last month, Attorney General Moody warned Floridians about the increase in COVID-19 related robocalls. To view that alert, click here.

A key part of that action would be for USTelecom to develop and roll out an online platform to collect live data from carriers and robocall-blocking apps. When USTelecom or a law enforcement agency detects an illegal robocall campaign, the law enforcement agency would then be able to submit a subpoena to USTelecom in a streamlined online portal.

The process would allow for rapid review by USTelecom and provide law enforcement agencies the ability to expedite subpoena procedures and access the platform to quickly retrieve relevant data. The platform would bolster law enforcement investigations and could potentially lead to attorneys general offices seeking temporary restraining orders that could stop a live robocall campaign in its tracks.

The coalition's letter follows a January meeting in Washington, D.C., with representatives from state attorneys general, federal agencies and the telecom industry. Some priorities developed at

that meeting include:

- Automating and increasing the total volume of traceback investigations;
- Alerting relevant law enforcement agencies of suspected illegal robocall campaigns;
- Enabling law enforcement agencies to electronically upload and receive responses to subpoenas and civil investigative demands, and providing swift response to those requests; and
- Identifying noncooperative voice service providers, including those that don't participate in the traceback process, repeatedly originate or accept illegal robocalls, or repeatedly fail to provide sufficient records.

The coalition believes these measures would strengthen the partnership between the USTelecom-backed ITG and attorneys general, a relationship that led to the creation of the Anti-Robocall Principles. Those principles were established in August 2019 when 51 attorneys general and 12 major telecom providers took aim at reducing the number of unwanted and illegal robocalls reaching the American people.

More recently—and due in part to the support from the telecommunications industry and state attorneys general—the Telephone Robocall Abuse Criminal Enforcement and Deterrence Act was signed into law by the federal government. This law enables the industry to develop call-authentication protocols to combat caller-ID spoofing and implement other sweeping anti-robocall measures. For more information about Attorney General Moody's action regarding the TRACED Act, click here.

To view the letter, click here.