

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 1, 2020

The Honorable Ajit V. Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Chairman Pai and Attorney General Barr:

We write today to emphasize the serious threat that fraudulent and scam robocalls pose to the safety and security of Americans across the country who are already experiencing significant disruptions to their everyday lives, heightened economic stresses, and concerns related to their health and wellbeing as a result of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Further, we urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and Department of Justice (DOJ) to take all necessary actions to safeguard and protect Americans from these scams.

Every day for the past couple of weeks, fraudsters have placed an estimated 1 million or more suspected suspicious calls about the coronavirus to Americans' smartphones, according to YouMail.¹ It has been reported that the FCC has received numerous reports of coronavirus-related robocall scams including: warnings of national quarantine orders or martial law; offers of free test kits, targeting individuals with preexisting conditions; messages purporting to be from the World Health Organization (WHO) or charities asking for money; HVAC cleaning or upgrades to protect against the virus; promotions of various bogus products, treatments, and cures; and asking for information to confirm a check from the government.²

We are particularly concerned about the threat that these fraudulent calls pose to vulnerable populations, specifically elderly Americans and low-income communities. People over the age of 65 make up an eighth of the U.S. population, but they represent as many as a third of all scam victims due to increased memory loss associated with advanced age, loneliness, and difficulty spotting warning signs associated with fraudulent schemes.³ Older Americans represent a nexus of our concerns due to both their increased vulnerability to these scams and higher risk for more serious complications from COVID-19.

While we appreciate the FCC's recent efforts to keep consumers informed about scam attempts related to the COVID-19 pandemic through the Agency's "COVID-19 Consumer Warnings and Safety Tips" online resource page, the bipartisan *Telephone Robocall Abuse*

¹ 'That can actually kill somebody': Scam robocalls are pitching fake coronavirus tests to vulnerable Americans, The Washington Post (March 19, 2020) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2020/03/19/robocalls-coronavirus-test/).

² *Be On Guard for Coronavirus Robocalls, warns FCC*, TechCrunch (March 20, 2020) (online at www.techcrunch.com/2020/03/20/be-on-guard-for-coronavirus-robocalls-warns-fcc/).

³ *Scams Trap Older Adults*, AARP (online at www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/info-02-2011/scams-trap-older-adults.html).

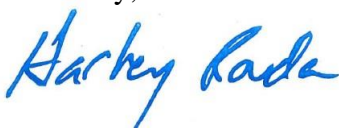
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Criminal Enforcement and Deterrent (TRACED) Act that was signed into law last year includes provisions to provide both the FCC and DOJ with enhanced authority and direction to take critical steps to protect the public by addressing a wide range of robocall scams.

We are concerned about widespread attempts to sell suspicious products and spread misinformation and fear. Your agencies must take all necessary actions to combat these nefarious scams and protect the safety, security, health, and welfare of all Americans.

Please let us know what concrete steps the FCC and DOJ will be taking to address these coronavirus-related robocalls by April 14, 2020.

Sincerely,



Harley Rouda
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

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