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Hawaii Attorney General Joins Effort to Expand Illegal Robocall Response

HONOLULU – Hawaii Attorney General Clare E. Connors recently joined a bipartisan coalition of 52 attorneys general in calling on USTelecom – the leading organization representing telecommunications providers – and its Industry Traceback Group (ITG) to continue its collaboration with state attorneys general by bolstering technological capabilities to improve enforcement against illegal robocallers.

In a [letter](#) sent yesterday to USTelecom cosponsored by Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost, the coalition is urging the association to further develop robocall traceback and other tools suited to law enforcement needs.

“Because these illegal robocalls threaten vulnerable people, this problem is not simply an annoyance,” said Attorney General Connors. “We need to give law enforcement the tools to address these calls.”

The letter asks USTelecom to advance the ITG’s abilities in identifying robocall campaigns, trends and business ecosystems; conducting automated traceback investigations; and coordinating with relevant law enforcement agencies.

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 issuing temporary restraining orders that could stop a live robocall campaign in its tracks.

The coalition's letter follows a January 2020 meeting in Washington, D.C., with representatives from state attorneys general offices, 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 (TRACED) 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.

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