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For Immediate Release

ROBOCALL SCAMMER FACES \$120 MILLION PROPOSED FINE FOR MASSIVE CALLER ID SPOOFING OPERATION

Timeshare Robocaller Apparently Made Almost 100 Million Illegally-Spoofed Calls

WASHINGTON, June 22, 2017 – The Federal Communications Commission today proposed a \$120 million fine against an individual who apparently made almost 100 million spoofed robocalls in violation of the Truth in Caller ID Act. The law prohibits callers from deliberately falsifying caller ID information to disguise their identity with the intent to harm or defraud consumers.

Mr. Adrian Abramovich of Miami, Florida apparently made 96 million spoofed robocalls during a three-month period. Mr. Abramovich’s operation apparently made the spoofed calls in order to trick unsuspecting consumers into answering and listening to his advertising messages. The proposed fine is based on 80,000 spoofed calls that the Commission has verified.

Consumers reported receiving calls that appeared to come from local numbers but, if they answered, they heard an automated message prompting them to “Press 1” to hear about “exclusive” vacation deals from well-known travel and hospitality companies such as Marriott, Expedia, Hilton and TripAdvisor. Consumers who did press the button were then transferred to foreign call centers where live operators attempted to sell vacation packages often involving timeshares. The call centers were not affiliated with the well-known travel and hospitality companies mentioned in the recorded message.

TripAdvisor contacted the FCC in 2016 after receiving complaints from consumers claiming the company had been robocalling them. TripAdvisor independently investigated these complaints and identified Abramovich as the source. In addition, Spōk, a medical paging provider that serves hospitals, emergency rooms, and physicians, complained to Commission staff that an illegal robocalling campaign was disrupting its network. From the information provided by Spōk, the Commission traced the calls to Adrian Abramovich. The FCC also received numerous consumer complaints that appeared to be in response to calls made by Mr. Abramovich.

Mr. Abramovich apparently used what has been called “neighbor spoofing” in hopes of gaining the trust of those receiving the call and increasing the likelihood of their answering. Neighbor spoofing takes place when the caller falsifies the caller ID to match the area code and first three digits of the recipient’s phone number, instead of the caller’s number or the number where the call was actually originating. The FCC received numerous consumer complaints about this practice. For example, one consumer stated: “I have daily – sometimes multiple times [a] day –

inbound spoofed calls (same area code and prefix as my own phone number) purporting to be from [Marriott] . . .”

The Truth in Caller ID Act of 2009 and the Commission’s rules prohibit spoofing with the intent to cause harm, defraud, or wrongfully obtain anything of value. Consumers rely on caller ID information to make decisions about what calls to accept, ignore, or block. Accurate caller ID information is a vital tool that consumers use to protect their privacy, avoid fraud, and ensure peace of mind.

Earlier today, the FCC’s Enforcement Bureau also issued a citation to Mr. Abramovich for apparent violations of the Telephone Consumer Protection Act’s robocall limits and the federal wire fraud statute. Under the Act, the Commission must first provide a warning—in the form of a citation—to TCPA violators if the person or entity in question does not possess a license or authorization issued by the FCC. If these violations continue, they may be subject to additional fines.

Action by the Commission June 22, 2017 by Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture (FCC 17-80). Chairman Pai and Commissioner Clyburn approving. Commissioner O’Rielly concurring. Chairman Pai and Commissioner Clyburn issuing separate statements.

More information on caller ID spoofing is available here: <https://www.fcc.gov/spoofing>

Consumer complaints are an essential tool in the FCC’s enforcement efforts. To file a complaint with the FCC, go to <https://consumercomplaints.fcc.gov/>, call (888) 225-5322 for voice, (888) 835-5322 for TTY; fax (866) 418-0232; or by writing us at: Federal Communications Commission, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau, Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20554.

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F.2d 385 (D.C. Cir. 1974).