

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls)	CG Docket No. 17-59
)	
Call Authentication Trust Anchor)	WC Docket No. 17-97
)	
)	

COMMENTS OF THE VOICE ON THE NET COALITION

The Voice on the Net Coalition (“VON”)¹ respectfully files these comments in response to the Commission’s Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“FNPRM”) seeking comments on a proposed safe harbor for companies choosing to block calls that fail Caller ID authentication under the SHAKEN/STIR framework and a proposal to require voice service providers to implement SHAKEN/STIR.² VON supports efforts to eliminate illegal robocalls, and it has actively participated in industry efforts to do so, but questions remain whether the SHAKEN/STIR is ready to be the basis for blocking of calls.

SHAKEN/STIR IS A WORK IN PROGRESS. SHAKEN/STIR is an industry-developed solution to authenticate Caller ID and address unlawful spoofing that holds much promise as one of the tools that can help reduce illegal robocalls. From the beginning, VON and its members have actively participated in the development of SHAKEN/STIR; VON serves on the board of the STI-GA and has been active with the various committees that helped choose the policy administrator and will be responsible for establishing funding mechanisms for the years ahead. VON and its members have devoted (and will continue to devote) significant financial and

¹ The VON Coalition works to advance regulatory policies that enable Americans to take advantage of the promise and potential of IP-enabled communications, including interconnected Voice over Internet Protocol (“VoIP”). For more information, see www.von.org.

² *Declaratory Ruling and Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, CG Docket No. 17-59 and WC Docket No. 17-97 (rel. June 7, 2019); *see also* 84 Fed. Reg. 29478 (June 24 4, 2019), establishing the July 24, 2019 deadline for comments.

human resources to the development of SHAKEN/STIR and remain hopeful that there will be significant industry adoption by the end of 2019, and more widespread adoption during 2020.

That said, much work needs to be done. This includes: the execution of a contract with iconectiv, the company chosen to serve as the policy administrator;³ system build and system acceptance; the process and pricing for issuance of service provider certificates and tokens; service provider acceptance testing; international adoption of the SHAKEN/STIR framework and the resultant complication of non-US originated calls; unavailability of authentication for TDM-originated or TDM-terminated calls, which may be more harmful to smaller carriers who serve rural and other high cost areas;⁴ and lawful calls from one-way VoIP providers who may not use standard numbering patterns. In addition, there currently is not a framework available under SHAKEN such as a delegated certificate or trusted carrier registry. We hope an appropriate framework can be implemented within a reasonable time frame. However, during the period of time that it remains unavailable, those providers who source their telephone numbers from a wholesale provider may find themselves unable to secure SHAKEN authentication for legitimate outbound calls. Finally, even a call that originates in IP from a SHAKEN participant and terminates in IP with a SHAKEN participant may transit an intermediate TDM facility during call routing. This could “break” any attestation provided under the SHAKEN framework, resulting in the likelihood that the call would be blocked as unauthenticated. Until all of these issues are resolved, authorizing the blocking of unauthenticated calls could affect a large volume of legitimate calls and reduce the reliability of the PSTN.⁵

VON expects that at some point in the future, as SHAKEN/STIR deployment becomes more widespread and IP interconnection becomes ubiquitous, failed authentication may improve as a potential proxy for determining which calls are unlawful. Until then, service providers should take advantage of other tools, including analytics applied on a reasonable, technology-neutral and nondiscriminatory basis, to determine which calls may be blocked. Carriers choosing to block that impose opt-out default blocking should provide customers with clear and

³ FNPRM at ¶ 71.

⁴ FNPRM at ¶ 80.

⁵ It would be inappropriate to use non-participation in US Telecom’s Traceback Forum as a factor for allowing blocking of calls. FNPRM at ¶ 55. We understand that some voice providers interested in joining the Traceback Forum may have been excluded, so it may not be available to the entirety of the voice provider ecosystem.

conspicuous notices detailing the types of calls that are blocked and how consumer may opt-out if wanted calls are not received.

Moreover, service providers should have a robust and reliable mechanism for identifying and remedying the blocking of lawful and wanted calls. Providing callers (or their service providers) with intercept messages or response codes for calls that have been blocked should minimize consumer and service provider frustration.⁶ In addition, the blocking service provider should have a response team available to immediately investigate claims of wrongful blocking along with the authority to assist network managers to allow for the completion of specific types or classes of otherwise lawful calls.

CRITICAL CALLS. VON supports added protections for critical calls, although VON believes that all legitimate calls should be terminated at their desired end point. The FNPRM proposes “requiring any voice service provider that offers call-blocking to maintain a “Critical Calls List” of numbers it may not block. Such lists would include at least the outbound numbers of 911 call centers (i.e., PSAPs) and government emergency outbound numbers—numbers that all consumers would not want blocked.”⁷ If the Commission is going to impose a requirement of this sort, it should first identify a comprehensive source of such numbers that voice service providers can utilize and that government emergency providers and 911 call centers will be required to update as their telephone numbers change.

SHAKEN/STIR MANDATE. VON does not support the adoption at this time of a mandate that voice service providers adopt the SHAKEN/STIR framework by a specific deadline.⁸ Although the size of the provider (as measured by revenue) might have some relevance as to its ability to implement SHAKEN/STIR in an expedited time frame, there are other equally if not more important factors that could impact implementation. For example, until certificate delegation or a trusted carrier registry is adopted as part of the SHAKEN/STIR framework, voice service providers who get their telephone numbers from wholesale providers won’t be able to fully implement SHAKEN or sign calls. Second, technology matters.

⁶ FNPRM at ¶ 58.

⁷ FNPRM at ¶ 63.

⁸ FNPRM at ¶¶ 71-78.

SHAKEN authenticates on the basis of a telephone number, so it is not clear yet how outbound voice calling services that don't use telephone numbers would implement SHAKEN. It also is not clear how TDM providers would be accommodated. Third, important details of SHAKEN still need to be finalized – e.g., the requirements for holding a certificate, the rules around signing, and the price of certificates haven't been established so it's not clear what implementation entails or what the threshold obligations would be. Once those details become available, the Commission must afford voice service providers a reasonable amount of time to plan, pay for, test, and implement this new technology in their networks. While we appreciate the interest in moving this forward, it is premature to do so at this time, and if mandatory implementation is required, the FCC must first develop a more comprehensive understanding of what SHAKEN will and will not be able to accommodate and make decisions accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The Commission should act in accordance with the recommendations herein.

Respectfully submitted,

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July 24, 2019