

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Adrian Abramovich, Marketing Strategy Leaders, Inc., and Marketing Leaders, Inc.*, Fil No. EB-TCD-15-000020488.

Have you ever gotten a call in which the phone number looks pretty familiar? The area code matches yours, and the first three “prefix” numbers match yours, but you can’t quite tell who it is?

If so, you’re not alone. This often results from a tactic known as “neighbor spoofing,” and inveterate robocallers are using it to bombard the American people with illegal robocalls without getting caught. Neighbor spoofing often tricks consumers into answering, since they think that the person on the other end must be someone from his or her local community.

Robocalling is consistently the top-ranked category of complaints that consumers bring to the FCC. That’s why I’m pleased that today the Commission is taking major, unprecedented action against what appears to be the most egregious “neighbor spoofing” robocalling scheme we have ever seen. Adrian Abramovich, through several faux marketing companies he owns and manages, appears to have made 96,758,223 robocalls between October 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016. 96,758,223. That works out to over one million unwanted calls every day and almost 44,000 such calls each hour.

Today, we respond in kind, proposing to fine Mr. Abramovich \$120 million.

Mr. Abramovich’s scheme apparently works like this. Upon answering a call, consumers are typically offered what appears to be an “exclusive” vacation deal offered by a well-known travel or hospitality company, like TripAdvisor, Expedia, Marriott, or Hilton. Consumers are prompted to “Press 1” and are then transferred to a call center, where live operators give them the hard sell on low-quality vacation packages that have no relation to the companies previously referenced. Unfortunately, many unsuspecting Americans are deceived into taking the bait.

Make no mistake: Mr. Abramovich appears to have been no passive party to this scam. He apparently found it profitable to send to these live operators the most vulnerable Americans—typically the elderly—to be bilked out of their hard-earned money. Many consumers spent from a few hundred up to a few *thousand* dollars on these “exclusive” vacation packages.

This scheme was particularly abhorrent because, given its breadth, it appears to have substantially disrupted the operations of an emergency medical paging provider. It did this by slowing down and potentially disabling its network. Pagers may be low-tech, but for doctors, these devices are simple and dependable standbys. By overloading this paging network, Mr. Abramovich could have delayed vital medical care, making the difference between a patient’s life and death.

Thanks to the tenacious sleuthing by the staff of our Enforcement Bureau, we were able to connect the dots among numerous consumer complaints that showed us the scope of Mr. Abramovich’s apparent scheme. The Bureau hand-verified over 80,000 calls from this three-month period. Every single one was spoofed to show what consumers must have thought was a local number. The Bureau also interviewed several people who had received calls, none of whom had provided consent.

Today marks the first time that the FCC is taking enforcement action against a large-scale spoofing operation under the Truth in Caller ID Act. This FCC is an active cop on the beat for consumers, and a cop that means business when it to their top concern: the scourge of robocalls. We aim to put unlawful robocallers out of business and to deter anyone else from hatching a business plan that plunders American consumers’ pocketbooks.

Thank you to the dedicated staff of the Enforcement Bureau, including Vilma Anderson, Tamara Baxter, Michael Carowitz, Lisa Gelb, Richard Hindman, Lisa Landers, Latashia Middleton, Nakasha Ramsey, Stacy Ruffin-Smith, Michael Scurato, Daniel Stepanicich, Kristi Thompson, Kim Thorne, Melanie Tiano, Bridgette Washington, and Lisa Williford for their meticulous work on this investigation.