CLAIRE McCASKILL
MISSOURI

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 11, 2016

Lowell C. McAdam
Chairman and CEO
Verizon Communications Inc.
140 West Street
New York, NY 10007

Dear Mr. McAdam:

Three years ago, following a July 2013 Senate hearing I convened on preventing fraudulent and unwanted robocalls, I wrote to trade associations representing the nation's largest wireline and wireless telecommunications providers seeking an analysis of technologies available or under development to prevent robocalls from reaching consumers. The United States Telecom Association (USTA) and CTIA-The Wireless Association (CTIA), both of which Verizon is a member, outlined technical and legal challenges to implementing such technologies but both trade associations also indicated the industry was hard at work to develop technologies to address the problem. Three years and billions of unwanted robocalls later consumers have realized virtually no benefit of this work.

Since that time, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in June 2015 issued a declaratory ruling clarifying that the use of such technologies would not violate providers' common carrier obligations. A month later, in July 2015, 45 state attorneys general wrote to the nation's five largest telecommunications carriers, including Verizon, urging the companies to take full advantage of the FCC's declaratory ruling and offer call-blocking technologies to consumers. Despite legal clarity and unprecedented pressure from a bipartisan group of the nation's top law enforcement officials consumers still have seen little progress.

In July 2016, FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler wrote to the nation's largest telecommunications carriers, including Verizon, urging them to offer call-blocking technologies to consumers at no cost and asked the companies to respond within 30 days with their solutions to address unwanted robocalls. Although an industry-wide "strike force" is expected to report back with recommendations within 60 days, I am concerned that – based on the industry's past unfilled commitments and inaction – this effort too will result in little benefit to consumers.

I share the frustration of the millions of consumers who have waited far too long already for relief from fraudulent and unwanted robocalls. Enforcement of existing laws and regulations as well as consumer education efforts certainly have important roles to play in addressing this problem, but aggressive action from our nation's telecommunications providers is our best hope at preventing unwanted robocalls from reaching consumers in the first place.

To better understand your company's efforts to date, and its commitment to addressing unwanted robocalls going forward, I ask that you please provide written responses to the following questions by September 12, 2016.

1. Since the 2013 commitment from telecommunications industry trade associations to work to develop technological solutions to address unwanted robocalls, what – if any – actions has your company taken in coordination with this industry effort or separate from it to offer consumers products and services to block unwanted robocalls?
2. Please provide a comprehensive list of products and services your company offers today to help consumers block unwanted robocalls. This list should detail any additional costs charged to consumers for such products and services, and should indicate any restrictions on availability based on service territory or other factors.
3. Does your company plan to participate in the industry "strike force" being convened in light of Chairman Wheeler's July 2016 letter, or otherwise engage in activities over the same 60-day time period to deliver concrete results to help consumers combat unwanted robocalls? If so please describe the efforts you expect your company to undertake.

In addition, I ask that you enclose any correspondence provided to Chairman Wheeler in response to his July 2016 letter and that any recommendations made to the FCC by the industry "strike force" be transmitted to my office as well.

It is my hope that renewed attention to this issue will finally result in relief for consumers from the unwanted and fraudulent robocalls that year after year rank among the top consumer complaints in the country.

Sincerely,

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator