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March 26, 2012

0408

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to express concern about the recent spate of cell phone thefts around the country and to inquire about Federal Communications Commission (FCC) action or options under consideration to deter these crimes.

As you know, in recent months, crimes involving smart phone theft have increased exponentially. These crimes vary but generally involve violent robberies of individuals' cell phones and subsequent resale of the stolen phones on the black market. Criminals are able to profit from these robberies because service providers are unable to differentiate between stolen and legitimate phones. Consequently, black market purchasers can reactivate the phones, purchase service, and operate them normally. In just the past year, there have been numerous instances of this type of crime across the country.

Last week, the Today Show highlighted a potential solution to the problem: the incorporation of technology within the phones that would enable manufacturers and wireless providers to identify stolen phones and prohibit the reactivation of service on these phones. Several countries have adopted this approach in order to deter phone theft. Although seemingly simple, I have concerns about the privacy implications of requiring tracking technology in phones. As I consider whether legislation is necessary to prevent these crimes, I would appreciate a detailed delineation of your views on the feasibility of this approach, as well as your assessment of alternative approaches to deterring cell phone theft.

Thank you for taking the time to look into this matter. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mark Pryor

Mark Pryor