

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Wisconsin and law enforcers nationwide announce enforcement sweep to stem the tide of illegal telemarketing calls to U.S. consumers

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MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin, along with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and other law enforcement partners nationwide, including attorneys general from all 50 states and the District of Columbia, announced a new crackdown on illegal telemarketing targeting operations responsible for billions of calls to U.S. consumers.

The joint state and federal “Operation Stop Scam Calls” initiative builds on the efforts of Wisconsin and other state and federal partners to combat the scourge of illegal telemarketing, including robocalls. This initiative targets telemarketers, the companies that hire them, and lead generators, who deceptively collect and provide consumers’ telephone numbers to robocallers and falsely represent those consumers have consented to receive calls. It also targets Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service providers who facilitate tens of billions of illegal robocalls every year, which often originate overseas.

“Telemarketing consistently ranks among our top consumer complaint categories every year,” said Secretary Randy Romanski of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP). “Consumers are their own first line of defense, but the work of DATCP and its partners in the Wisconsin

Department of Justice and FTC is vital to addressing the troublesome number of illegal calls they receive. Fewer scam calls means fewer scam victims.”

“Attorneys General across the country, the Federal Trade Commission, and our partners at DATCP are unified about the need to combat illegal telemarketing calls,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “We will continue working collaboratively to protect consumers from scams and widespread annoyance.”

“Today, government agencies at all levels are united in fighting the scourge of illegal telemarketing. We are taking action against those who trick people into phony consent to receive these calls and those who make it easy and cheap to place these calls,” said Samuel Levine, Director of the FTC’s Bureau of Consumer Protection, who appeared at a news conference in Chicago announcing the initiative. “The FTC and its law enforcement partners will not rest in the fight against illegal telemarketing.”

As part of Operation Stop Scam Calls, Wisconsin announced Attorney General Josh Kaul sued Michael D. Lansky, LLC, which does business under the name Avid Telecom, its owner Michael Lansky, and its vice president Stacey S. Reeves, for allegedly initiating and facilitating billions of illegal robocalls to millions of people and violating the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, the Telemarketing Sales Rule, and other federal and state telemarketing and consumer laws. Wisconsin also announced that DATCP has given 152 presentations in the last year that educated consumers on the use of robocalls to perpetrate scams and fraud.

Wisconsin’s actions build on the work of its state and federal partners including the FTC, which announced five new cases against companies and individuals responsible for distributing or assisting in the distribution of billions of illegal telemarketing calls to consumers nationwide. Other contributing law enforcers include the U.S. Department of Justice, Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Federal Communications Commission.

In addition to the law enforcement actions announced today, the FTC has a variety of materials aimed at helping consumers block unwanted telemarketing calls. This includes advice related to robocalls and other unwanted calls and information on how to spot and avoid phone scams at ftc.gov/calls, which is also available in Spanish at ftc.gov/llamadas. The FTC also has a new educational webpage at ftc.gov/RobocallScams that includes examples of real illegal robocalls and steps

people can take to avoid robocall scams.

To learn more about scams and how to file a complaint against an illegal telemarketing call, contact the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's Consumer Protection Hotline toll-free at (800) 422-7128 or by email at DATCPHotline@wisconsin.gov.