



# PUBLIC NOTICE

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## **WIRELINE COMPETITION BUREAU ANNOUNCES POSTPONEMENT OF INITIAL LAUNCH DATE OF THE NATIONAL LIFELINE ELIGIBILITY VERIFIER**

### **WC Docket No. 11-42**

By this Public Notice, the Wireline Competition Bureau (Bureau) announces that the launch of the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier (National Verifier), originally scheduled for six initial states in December 2017,<sup>1</sup> will be postponed until early 2018.

The Commission directed the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC) to establish the National Verifier in the *2016 Lifeline Order* to make independent eligibility determinations and perform a variety of other functions necessary to enroll subscribers into the Lifeline program.<sup>2</sup> The *2016 Lifeline Order* set an expectation that USAC would deploy the National Verifier in at least five states by December 31, 2017. The order also noted that the National Verifier must comply with applicable laws and federal government guidance on privacy and security, including the Federal Information Security Management Act and National Institute of Standards and Technology publications.<sup>3</sup>

Recently, as the development of the National Verifier has progressed, USAC advised the Bureau that the National Verifier's systems have unresolved potential vulnerabilities that have not yet been completed under the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA).<sup>4</sup> If the National Verifier is launched before its underlying systems have been fully tested and before USAC has remediated critical vulnerabilities, the security of personal subscriber information located in the National Verifier databases could be compromised.

We take seriously the Commission's statutory obligation and responsibility under FISMA to "provid[e] information security protections commensurate with the risk and magnitude of the harm resulting from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction of" information collected by an agency and information systems operated by an agency.<sup>5</sup> To fulfill this responsibility and protect the security of Lifeline applicants' personal information, we expect that a postponement until early 2018 will provide USAC with sufficient time to complete all FISMA requirements prior to the initial launch of the National Verifier in the six states previously identified by

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<sup>1</sup> *Wireline Competition Bureau Announces Initial Launch of the National Lifeline Eligibility Verifier*, Public Notice, 32 FCC Rcd 6727 (WCB 2017).

<sup>2</sup> See *Lifeline and Link Up Reform and Modernization et al.*, Third Report and Order, Further Report and Order, and Order on Reconsideration, 31 FCC Rcd 3962, 4006, para. 126 (2016) (*2016 Lifeline Order*).

<sup>3</sup> See *id.* at 4000, 4017-18, paras. 126, 154-55.

<sup>4</sup> See Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002, as amended, 44 U.S.C. § 3551 *et seq.*

<sup>5</sup> 44 U.S.C. § 3554(a)(1)(A).

the Bureau in its August 2017 Public Notice. We note that the FISMA accreditation necessary for the launch in the initial states will also enable future expansion of the system into additional states.

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