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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

STEVE ISRAEL
Second District, New York

WTD
WCS
6/5

June 4, 2012

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

Dear Chairman Genachowski,

I write today to urge the Federal Communications Commission to work with wireless carriers to make password-protected voicemail standard for mobile phones. The lack of security is a dangerous problem that threatens the privacy rights of my constituents in New York and all Americans.

I know you are aware of this problem and implore you to use your powers to address this and protect American consumers. On July 14, 2011 you testified before the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittees on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade and Communications and Technology in the wake of the phone-hacking scandal by British newspaper *News of the World*. During that joint subcommittee hearing you were asked about the security of cell phones, and you stated "There is no question that greater protection can be accomplished by using password protection and that's an area that should be looked at."

I understand that many carriers have voluntarily made password protection as the default (in which consumers must actively opt out), but other wireless carriers have not made password-protected voicemail a standard feature in their products or contracts. Even worse, these outlier carriers often hide the fact that password-protection for voicemail requires action by the consumer in the very fine print of their wireless contracts. It is of the utmost importance that consumers are aware of the dangers surrounding password security vulnerabilities.

I appreciate that the Commission has already taken many positive steps towards protecting smart phone and cell phone users' privacy, but more must be done to inform consumers about the danger for exposure of personal information. As recent news reports show, no citizens are safe from this breach of privacy, even celebrities. I recommend that the Commission strive to inform consumers to the fullest extent about the wireless products they are purchasing and any privacy concerns with those products.

As we all know, the privacy of American citizens is paramount to the Commission, which is why I thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to hearing from you concerning this issue. If you have any questions, please contact Molly Ahearn at 202-225-3335.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Israel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Steve Israel
Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

September 21, 2012

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Steve Israel
U.S. House of Representatives
2457 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Israel:

Thank you for your letter regarding password-protected voicemail for mobile phones. I appreciate your bringing this matter to my attention and have directed the Acting Chief of Staff of the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau to respond. I am pleased to provide the enclosed letter addressing your concerns.

If you have any additional questions or need any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "Julius Genachowski", written over a horizontal line.

Julius Genachowski

Enclosure



Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20554

CGB

September 21, 2012

Control No. 1200685

The Honorable Steve Israel
U.S. House of Representatives
2457 Rayburn House
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Israel:

Thank you for your June 4, 2012, letter urging the Commission to work with wireless carriers to make password-protected voice mail an industry standard for mobile phones. We appreciate your views and agree that this issue raises important privacy considerations for wireless consumers.

The protection of consumer privacy is a fundamental goal of the Commission. As Chairman Genachowski has confirmed, the use of passwords to access voice mail enhances privacy protections to consumers. Many wireless providers have made such passwords mandatory. We fully support and encourage this practice. We recognize, however, that not every wireless carrier follows this standard. In these instances, we share your concern that wireless carriers clearly and conspicuously inform consumers about the risks surrounding voice mail security and the steps they need to take to protect their privacy interests. I can assure you that your letter will be given full consideration by the relevant Bureaus and offices at the Commission in the interest of ensuring that the privacy interests of consumers are protected.

We appreciate your interest in this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Carowitz".

Michael Carowitz
Acting Chief of Staff
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau