

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls)	CG Docket No. 17-59
)	
)	

**JOINT REPLY COMMENTS OF THE VOICE ON THE NET COALITION, INCOMPAS
AND THE CLOUD COMMUNICATIONS ALLIANCE**

The Voice on the Net Coalition (“VON”), INCOMPAS and the Cloud Communications Alliance (“CCA”) file this joint reply to address comments filed in response to the Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“FNPRM”) in the above-referenced proceeding.¹ The filed comments are clear: failure to implement SIP Codes 607 and 608 will result in legitimate calls being blocked and in onerous redress processes, thus preventing the American people from realizing the benefits of SHAKEN/STIR. Bankers, doctors, and hospitals, among others, may not reach their clients, and numerous Americans will not receive wanted calls.

Larger service providers present no facts to undermine these concerns. Instead, they rely on vague standards and threats of doom to convince the Commission that full implementation of SIP Codes 607 and 608 is impossible and unnecessary. If the Commission accepts these arguments, enterprise customers will increasingly migrate towards larger providers with more resources to devote to the redress process, which will result in less competition in the industry and will allow those larger providers to benefit from their refusal to implement SIP Codes 607 and 608. The Commission should not let this happen.

¹ See *Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls*, Order on Reconsideration, Sixth Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, and Waiver Order, CG Docket No. 17-59 (rel. Dec. 14, 2021); notice of the FNPRM was published in the Federal Register, establishing February 14, 2022, as the deadline for filing reply comments. 86 Fed. Reg. 74399 (December 30, 2021).

Discussion. As explained by the American Bankers Association (“ABA”) and by VON in its initial comments, legitimate calls are being blocked by the hundreds, if not thousands, without any information on the reason for the block. The return of SIP Code 603, a general “kill” code, does not provide any useful information to the originating carrier. As many commenters state, SIP Code 603 only indicates call rejection and does not sufficiently provide originating providers with the information to take next steps, if warranted, to begin the redress process or further investigate possible fraud on the network.²

According to the ABA one large bank reported that it receives 300-500 SIP Code 603 responses per hour.³ That volume makes it infeasible to sift through each of these responses to determine the nature of the call failure, particularly because voice service providers do not provide SIP Code 603 responses in a uniform manner, and the code itself does not identify who blocked the call. The ABA also noted that smaller financial institutions, health care providers, and retail outlets have even less capacity to sort through these responses.⁴

This is why trade associations and smaller service providers, such as the members of VON, INCOMPAS and CCA are advocating for near-term implementation of SIP Codes 607 and 608. Comments claims that 603 is sufficient and contains the same information as Codes 607 and 608 are not supported by the facts.

The parties supporting the continued use of SIP Code 603 allege that it provides (unspecified) actionable information for call originators to investigate analytics-based blocking and seek redress.⁵ As an initial matter, none of the call originators that have filed comments in this proceeding agree with that assertion. Instead, they universally agree that the Commission should require the continued implementation of SIP Codes 607 and 608. As stated in our initial comments, SIP Codes 607 and 608 provide means for originating voice service providers to

² Comments of the American Bankers Association, et. al. (“ABA”), CG Docket No. 17-59 at 6 (January 31, 2022); Joint Comments of INCOMPAS and the Cloud Communications Alliance (“INCOMPAS”), CG Docket No. 17-59 at 5 (January 31, 2022); Comments of the National Opinion Research Center (“NORC”), CG Docket No. 17-59 at 3 (January 31, 2022).

³ ABA Comments at 7.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Comments of USTelecom, CG Docket No. 17-59 at 1 (January 31, 2022); Comments of NCTA, CG Docket No. 17-59 at 3 (January 31, 2022); Comments of Transaction Network Services, Inc. (“TNS”), CG Docket No. 17-59 at 3 (January 31, 2022).

assess which next steps, if any, are appropriate.⁶ By mandating two codes, the FCC is minimizing the time all providers are spending on resolving unnecessary trouble tickets and instead could be implementing IP technology to further the adoption of SHAKEN/STIR. As the Commission decides how to move forward in this proceeding, it should ask itself why call originators would unanimously support SIP Codes 607 and 608, if SIP Code 603 was of use?

One commenter surmises that calling parties can simply work with their service providers to determine by whom the call was blocked.⁷ This is not the case. As noted in the bank example above, the volume and lack information accompanying SIP Code 603 responses makes that an inefficient, Herculean effort. A similar effort would not be required for SIP Codes 607 and 608.⁸ Generally, originating parties can quickly and efficiently confirm to questioning callers that no further action is permitted on SIP Code 607 responses since those blocks were originated by the called party, while quickly identifying which calls require redress via the SIP Code 608 response. This provides for more efficient use of calling party, originating party, and terminating party/analytics provider resources. This is not possible with code 603 because the originating provider does not know if the terminating user or an intermediate provider blocked the call.

Commenters advocating for permanent adoption of Code 603 do not explain what steps they have taken to implement Codes 607 and 608 or the specific reasons why implementation is impossible. As recommended by INCOMPAS, the Commission should determine the current status of the standards development process as it relates to the implementation, as it appears that no further action occurred after mid-2021.⁹ The Commission should ascertain the status of standards development for SIP Codes 607 and 608 and require ATIS to develop a project timeline to complete implementation of these codes by December 31, 2022 and to provide periodic reports of its progress toward finalizing the standards.¹⁰

⁶ Comments of the Voice on the Net Coalition, CG Docket No. 17-59 at 2 (January 31, 2022).

⁷ See, e.g., NCTA Comments at 3.

⁸ Id. at 4.

⁹ INCOMPAS Comments at 3-4.

¹⁰ Id. at 4; ABA Comments at 9; NORC Comments at 6; Comments of Professional Association for Customer Engagement, CG Docket No. 17-59 at 3 (January 28, 2022).

While two commenters suggest that industry is exploring enhancements to SIP Code 603 will provide actionable information,¹¹ voice service providers have not committed to enhancing SIP Code 603 to indicate network level blocking.¹² The actionable information the two commenters propose include a notification to distinguish between analytics-based blocking and other reasons for a decline.¹³ The comments provide no detail on how long it will take or how much it will cost to complete this enhancement, or whether such enhancement has widespread support among industry. It is unclear why the industry should spend resources enhancing SIP Code 603 (which currently has other use cases) rather than completing the implementation of SIP 608, which was specifically designed to provide information regarding analytical blocking.

Instead of explaining this dichotomy, some commenters make unsupported claims about problems implementing and receiving SIP Codes 607 and 608. For instance, there is a suggestion that completing the implementation of SIP Codes 607 and 608 will be costly and time consuming.¹⁴ Another opines that callers' (unspecified) equipment and systems may need substantial upgrades or replacement to receive SIP Codes 607 and 608, whereas it should largely be able to receive SIP Code 603.¹⁵ These claims are not supported with specific facts or cost or time estimates, and none of the calling parties have suggested they anticipate upgrading or replacing equipment or systems in order to accommodate SIP Codes 607 and 608.

What is more, there is no merit to the argument that SIP Codes 607 and 608 gives bad actors additional information that could facilitate attacks on voice networks akin to DDoS attacks (by efforts to try alternative routes to deliver the call).¹⁶ Similar information is provided via SIP Code 603 today; and there is no evidence that the more detailed response creates greater vulnerability. In fact, the FCC confirmed that this was not a legitimate concern acknowledging that bad actors can recognize small changes in their outbound calling patterns and determine when changes need to be made. The FCC states “And we find that the potential harm from

¹¹ USTelecom Comments at 2; TNS Comments at 4. These commenters suggest that these enhancements would be “additional.” However, SIP Code 603 currently provides no actionable information regarding analytical blocking. In essence, these providers are proposing building a new SIP Code 603.

¹² Id. at 5.

¹³ USTelecom Comments at 2; TNS Comments at 4.

¹⁴ Id.; USTelecom Comments at 4.

¹⁵ Id. at 3.

¹⁶ NCTA Comments at 2.

providing notifications to bad actors is more than offset by the significant benefit to legitimate callers.”¹⁷ If this was a legitimate concern, it’s best addressed in standards bodies to determine who can receive the SIP Code 607 or 608.

Finally, TNS argues that the industry would have trouble adding a jCard to SIP Code 608. This is an issue that ATIS should consider as it finalizes implementation of SIP Code 608. If ATIS determines that TNS is correct, the FCC should confirm that only terminating providers (i.e., the terminating TN service provider) and their subsequent analytics engines can return SIP Code 608 to ensure that originating service providers can identify who blocked the call for redress purposes. All terminating providers leveraging SIP Codes 608 without jCard or identification information included in the SIP header should have their redress process included in the US Telecom Redress list.¹⁸

¹⁷ *Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls*, CG Docket No. 17-69, Fourth Report and Order, 35 FCC Rcd 15221, para. 54 (2020).

¹⁸ <https://www.ustelecom.org/the-industry-traceback-group-itg/call-labeling-and-blocking-points-of-contact/>

CONCLUSION

For the reasons described above and in the VON and INCOMPAS/CCA opening comments, the Commission should require carriers to implement SIP Codes 607 and 608 as soon as practicable and phase out the use of SIP Code 603.

Respectfully submitted,

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