

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 24, 2018

The Honorable Maureen K. Ohlhausen
Acting Chairman
Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20580

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Acting Chairman Ohlhausen and Chairman Pai:

We call on the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission to investigate a new impostor scam targeting claimants of the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund (VCF). As Senators from Connecticut and New Jersey, we represent constituents that were deeply and forever affected by the tragic attacks on September 11, 2001. In Connecticut and New Jersey, 97 and 1,182 survivors and responders of 9/11, respectively, have received compensation through the VCF. This fund, established shortly after 9/11 to aid and compensate the victims, survivors, and responders, was reactivated in 2011 and reauthorized by Congress again in 2015. It is paramount that this population of individuals is protected from these unconscionable fraudsters seeking to inflict yet more harm on those who have already suffered so much.

According to an alert posted on the VCF's website, unknown individuals claiming to be representatives of VCF have been making calls that "ask questions about the status of an individual's VCF claim, state that the individual may be entitled to money, and/or ask for personal information in order to mail a claim package or file a claim on the individuals' behalf." These callers will seek a range of information from individuals, including Social Security numbers, mailing addresses, bank account numbers, medical histories, and proof of whether a person worked in the 9/11 exposure zone. From reports, it is not yet clear how this information is being used—whether to bilk funds from the compensation fund or to be used for identity theft.

It has also been reported that these unknown callers are using spoofed phone numbers with New York area codes. As you know, spoofing is illegal under the Truth in Caller ID Act. This law prohibits any person or entity from transmitting misleading or inaccurate caller ID information "with the intent to defraud, cause harm, or wrongly obtain anything of value." Anyone who is illegally spoofing can face penalties of up to \$10,000 for each violation. Accordingly, we urge the FCC to immediately investigate and take action to ensure the perpetrators of this scam are fined for each and every violation.

While we appreciated the FTC's recently issued "Scam Alert" on the agency's consumer education blog regarding this particular scam, the FTC must also couple its consumer education efforts with swift action, to make clear to these impostors that these actions will not be tolerated. We also ask you to make referrals to the Department of Justice, as appropriate, if you discover cases of identity theft.

This cruel and illegal scam, which preys upon the victims of 9/11, adds to the already significant emotional and financial toll on 9/11 survivors and responders. It is critical that the FTC and FCC conduct a swift, aggressive investigation and bring these callous lawbreakers to justice for their despicable acts. We respectfully request a response by May 8, 2018.

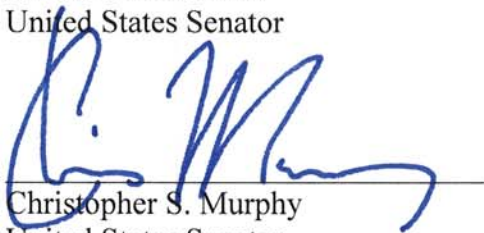
Sincerely,



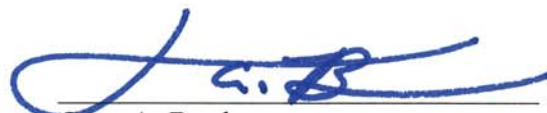
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator