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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

STEVE ISRAEL
Second District, New York

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,

Steve Israel

Steve Israel
Member of Congress