



News Release

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Inspector General Announces Civil Action to Prevent Social Security Scam Calls from Reaching Consumers

The Inspector General for the Social Security Administration, Gail S. Ennis, is announcing two landmark civil complaints filed by the Department of Justice in the Eastern District of New York, seeking injunctions against five telecommunications companies and their owners. The complaints allege the companies and their owners have for years knowingly facilitated government imposter telephone scams that reached Americans' personal phones. The Department of Justice issued a news release about the filing and request for court orders, and held a press call earlier today with U.S. Attorney Richard Donaghue, Inspector General Ennis, and Chief Postal Inspector Gary Barksdale.

Social Security scams—in which callers allege a Social Security number or benefit problem, and demand immediate payment to avoid arrest or other legal action—are the #1 type of fraud reported to the Federal Trade Commission and Social Security OIG. If granted, the court orders sought will prevent the five enjoined companies from continuing to “facilitate the delivery of millions of fraudulent ‘robocalls’ every day from foreign call centers to the U.S. telecommunications system.”

The Social Security Office of the Inspector General played a primary investigative role in the effort that led to today’s civil complaints. Under the supervision of Assistant Inspector General for Investigations Jennifer Walker, our Major Case Unit, led by Special Agent-in-Charge Kevin Huse, worked closely with DOJ’s Transnational Elder Fraud Strike Force. Our Office of Counsel for Investigations and Enforcement, led by Acting Counsel Sotiris Planzos, and Social Security’s Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeffrey Hill and Lisa Sanniti, provided legal support. Our law enforcement partners include U.S. Postal Inspection Service, Homeland Security Investigations, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, and the U.S. Secret Service; and the Federal Communications Commission and Federal Trade Commission provided data support.

“We have pursued this investigation on behalf of the many Americans who have suffered financial losses because these companies have continued to allow scam calls to reach consumers,” said Inspector General Ennis. “This initial action should serve as a warning to other companies that seek to turn a profit by facilitating scams that exploit—and damage—the public’s trust in Social Security.”

Inspector General Ennis continues to urge the public to exercise caution with any caller who claims to be a government employee. Government agencies will never threaten you with arrest or other legal action if you do not immediately pay a fine or debt with cash, retail gift cards, wire transfers, or internet currency. They will also never demand secrecy from you in resolving a debt or any other problem. If you need to send a payment to Social Security, SSA will send a letter with payment options and appeal rights.

The public can report Social Security scams to us at <https://oig.ssa.gov> and learn more at oig.ssa.gov/scam.