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### Voice-over-Internet Protocol

Voice-over-Internet Protocol, commonly referred to as “VoIP”, is described by the Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) as technology that allows you to make telephone calls using a computer network, over a data network like the Internet. VoIP converts the voice signal from your telephone into a digital signal that travels over the internet then converts it back at the other end so you can speak to anyone with a regular phone number. When placing a VoIP call using a phone with an adapter, you'll hear a dial tone and dial just as you always have. VoIP may also allow you to make a call directly from a computer using a conventional telephone or a microphone.

VoIP has been receiving increased attention and usage because businesses that use the Internet and Internet protocol (“IP”) networks to deliver voice communications have the potential to reduce costs, support innovation, and improve access to communications services around the world. However, this new technology poses a challenge for regulators, because it does not fit neatly within the traditional regulatory model, which treats voice and data services differently.

Recently, the FCC mandated that VoIP providers must deliver 911 calls to the customer's local emergency operator. Companies have 120 days to comply. With this enactment, the FCC eliminated one of the primary criticisms of VoIP.

More regulation is sure to follow. Under existing laws, regulators would have a tough time arguing that VoIP calls should meet the same standards set forth in the Telephone Consumer Protection Act, the Telephone Sales Rule or Do-Not-Call or state regulations. The FCC, however, is presently examining what its role should be in this new environment. In fact, the FCC has the general consensus among industry leaders is even though the regulations probably do not apply to VoIP calls, businesses should be complying.

If history is any indication, when industries ignore consumer privacy and comply only with the letter and not the spirit of the law, politicians are sure to move. Just ask the telemarketing industry that now faces onerous laws on all levels as a result of Do-Not-Call.