



# NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.  
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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## FCC CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI ANNOUNCES MAJOR PROGRESS IN USAGE-BASED ALERT PROGRAM TO PROTECT MOBILE CONSUMERS FROM ‘BILL SHOCK’; WIRELESS CARRIERS MEET AND BEAT DEADLINE TO PROVIDE FREE DATA, VOICE, TEXT & INTERNATIONAL ALERTS

*Hundreds of millions of wireless customers can now receive automatic usage alerts when consumption of data, voice, text & international charges approaches or exceeds plan limits; More than 97% of wireless customers across the country on track to be protected from bill shock by April 2013*

Washington, D.C. – FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski announced today that participating U.S. wireless companies have met or beat the deadline to provide wireless customers with free, automatic usage-based alerts when they approach or exceed plan limits for data, voice and text – as well as alerts for international charges. This marks significant progress in the Commission’s effort to eliminate ‘bill shock,’ launched exactly one year ago (October 17, 2011) by Chairman Genachowski, who was joined by CTIA-The Wireless Association (CTIA) and Consumers Union.

Chairman Genachowski has made eliminating bill shock a central part of the Commission’s Consumer Empowerment Agenda. Bill shock occurs when wireless customers experience a sudden, unexpected increase in their monthly bill as a result of unknowingly exceeding plan limits for data, voice, or texts, or incur significant international charges.

**Chairman Genachowski said**, “When we launched this initiative last year, we made a commitment that the FCC would remain vigilant to ensure this agreement was effective for consumers. We have, and it is. Today, by harnessing technology to empower consumers, almost all Americans can receive alerts to help avoid unexpected charges, giving them the information they need to manage monthly wireless bills. I’m pleased to report that we’re on track to full industry compliance by April. I want to thank the wireless industry and Consumers Union for their continued partnership in this important effort.”

In 2010, the FCC identified bill shock as a growing consumer problem that needed a solution. According to a 2011 survey by Consumers Union, roughly one in five Americans with mobile phone plans received unexpected charges on their bills during the previous year. In total, that amounts to tens of millions of people nationwide.

A voluntary agreement by CTIA, which includes as its members the overwhelming majority of wireless carriers in the nation, offered a series of commitments that would help eliminate the problem of bill shock by April 2013. That includes a commitment that CTIA members provide at least 2 out of the 4 types of alerts (data, voice, text, international roaming) by today, October 17<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Genachowski

announced today that U.S wireless companies have met or exceeded this goal and are on track to provide all alerts by April 2013.

To track progress, the FCC launched a **Bill Shock Web Portal** earlier this year to give consumers at-a-glance updates about carriers' implementation progress. Click [HERE](#) (<http://www.fcc.gov/encyclopedia/bill-shock-wireless-usage-alerts-consumers>) to visit the webpage. The Bill Shock Web Portal also offers links to participating carrier websites, meeting commitments from last year's agreement to clearly disclose policies and tools regarding usage balances and alerts.

### **ABOUT CHAIRMAN GENACHOWSKI'S 'CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT AGENDA'**

The FCC's Consumer Empowerment Agenda focuses on harnessing technology and information to help consumers make informed decisions in the communications marketplace. The agency's Consumer Empowerment Agenda includes resources to help Americans protect themselves against cramming, mystery fees, and bill shock along with greater openness and transparency efforts to make more data easily available to the public. In the past year, the FCC has introduced new consumer-oriented initiatives to combat cell phone theft, prevent hidden fees on prepaid calling cards, and enforcement actions to protect consumers from robocalls and jammers.

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