



## Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7  
 2180 Milvia Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704  
 PHONE 510-981-7170 FAX 510-981-7177  
 kworthington@ci.berkeley.ca.us

### CONSENT CALENDAR

September 10, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Kriss Worthington, District 7, Berkeley City Council  
 Subject: Implement More Functions to Ensure Smartphone Safety from Theft

#### RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to the CTIA (The Wireless Association) to recommend implementing a “kill switch” function to cell phone manufacturers and carriers.

#### BACKGROUND

Council item “*Protect Consumers from Cell Phone Theft*” was passed with a unanimous vote in 2012 in which a letter was sent to encourage the CTIA to consider crosschecking the phone’s serial number to block stolen phones and to request data from individual carriers on the reported phones stolen from Berkeley residents and their current policies to prevent phone theft.

The CTIA has created this database, but does not block “jail broken” phones from being reactivated. “Jail breaking” allows users to have root access to the iOS operating system of Apple devices and to download other applications not offered through the Apple App Store. Because of this, the CTIA database has not been effective to prevent smart phone thefts.

The San Francisco District Attorney recommended that manufacturers and carriers implement a “kill switch” function that would make stolen smart phones inoperable on any network, anywhere in the world even if device is turned off or if the SIM card has been removed. Eliminating the capability for the phone to be reactivated would make it useless, and would therefore discourage thefts.<sup>1</sup>

Australia introduced an anti-theft program that detects the electronic serial number of a cell phone, called the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI), which is shared with all carriers to block those devices across all Australian networks. It is reported that this program has cut cell phone theft by 25% from 2004 to 2011. During that same time period, there has been an increase in mobile service operations with 16.2 million subscribers in 2004 and 29.28 million mobile services in operation in 2011.<sup>2</sup>

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Minimal.

## CONTACT

Kriss Worthington

510-981-7170

Judi Abegania

[jabegania@gmail.com](mailto:jabegania@gmail.com)

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Letter to the CTIA (The Wireless Association)

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.sfdistrictattorney.org/index.aspx?page=262>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.amta.org.au/articles/Australian.anti-theft.mobile.phone.technology.highlighted.on.US.television>

CTIA (The Wireless Association)  
Steve M. Largent  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
1400 16<sup>th</sup> Street, N. W., Suite 600  
Washington, DC 20036

Dear CTIA Officers and Board of Directors,

The Berkeley City Council acknowledges and appreciates the important service your company provides to our constituents who depend on your service to conduct business calls, stay in touch with family and friends, and make emergency calls.

We encourage manufacturing and carrier companies to implement other anti-theft features such locking, wiping, and tracking and supporting Senator Schumer's bill on making cell phone ID tampering a federal crime. We believe another policy can be implemented alongside to benefit both consumers and your companies. Australia's anti-theft program detects the electronic serial number of a cell phone, called the International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI), which is shared with all carriers to block those devices across all Australian networks. This service is free to all cellular customers in Australia and it is reported that this program has cut cell phone theft by 25% from 2004 to 2011. During that same time period, there has been an increase in mobile service operations with 16.2 million subscribers in 2004 and 29.28 million mobile services in operation in 2011.

By adopting a similar deterrent policy, stolen phones would be inoperable under any network, anywhere in the world even if device is turned off or if the SIM card has been removed. Eliminating the capability for the phone to be reactivated would render it useless, and would therefore discourage thefts.

