



March 20, 2018

The Honorable A. Mitchell McConnell, Jr.
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Paul D. Ryan, Jr.
Speaker of the House
US House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy P. D. Pelosi
Minority Leader
US House of Representatives

VIA EMAIL

Leadership of the Congress of the United States:

The undersigned associations, who collectively represent the interests of public safety professionals and the public safety communications industry, urge you to include a line-item in the current omnibus funding package for a significant federal grant program to modernize the nation's 911 systems.

The safety and security of the nation begins with 911. Yet the 911 system remains limited by decades-old technology, and is in urgent need of modernization to what is known as Next Generation 911 (NG911). NG911 would leverage modern broadband for the benefit of the public and law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical personnel, creating opportunities for cost savings and advanced features such as the ability to send photos and videos to 911. Without significant federal funding, we are concerned that 911 networks across the country including in rural and urban areas will not be upgraded quickly and efficiently.

In 2012, Congress funded the implementation of an advanced, interoperable, wireless broadband network for first responders, known as FirstNet. The progress of FirstNet highlights the need for Congress to make a similar investment to modernize the complete emergency communications sector of our nation's critical infrastructure by achieving Next Generation 911. Until 911 networks are upgraded nationwide, the public will not be able to send photos and videos to 911 centers, and FirstNet will not achieve its full promise. NG911 is also necessary to improve the interoperability, resiliency, and operations of the 911 system.

It is time for Congress to act again, to ensure America's public safety professionals have the tools they need. 911 centers must have the financial, operational, and technical resources to enable responders in the field to receive data such as photos and videos from the public that have been properly triaged and analyzed by 911 professionals. With a significant federal grant program, Congress can ensure that our nation's leadership in broadband technology includes the world's most advanced emergency communications networks. Federal support will drive significant innovation and economies of scale via a competitive marketplace, and ensure that all 911 centers in rural and urban areas upgrade quickly and uniformly throughout the country. A federal grant program to modernize 911 would also complement other key goals and initiatives, such as broadband access to rural areas, smart communities, connected vehicles, and intelligent transportation systems.

In sum, federal resources are critical to the ongoing and future success of 911 as the nation's resource for emergency assistance, to enable systems across the country to make the necessary transition to Next Generation 911.

Respectfully submitted,

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