



March 19, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member, Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

On behalf of the Public Safety Next Generation 9-1-1 Coalition, we respectfully submit this letter for the record concerning the imperative of modernizing our nation's 50+ year-old 9-1-1 infrastructure to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1). As you consider the national security implications of spectrum policy at the hearing entitled "Spectrum and National Security," we highlight the national security imperative of NG9-1-1 and opportunity to fund NG9-1-1 with spectrum auction revenue.

Our coalition was honored to collaborate in a bipartisan fashion with the House and Senate, as well as industry stakeholders, to draft legislation that would create an NG9-1-1 grant program. This legislation would provide the funding needed to deploy NG9-1-1 in a fully interoperable, comprehensive, secure, innovative, and reliable manner throughout urban and rural areas, ensuring no community is left behind.

In late 2022, the NG9-1-1 bill was included in a legislative package that would have directed the revenue from spectrum auctions managed by the Federal Communications Commission to fund NG9-1-1 implementation. That approach received strong bipartisan and bicameral support and nearly passed into law. More recently, the NG9-1-1 legislation was included in H.R. 3565 (the Spectrum Auction Reauthorization Act), which passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee with unanimous support last year.

Federal support for NG9-1-1 remains an urgent need. The cyberthreats are outpacing our public safety agencies' defenses. Every day that passes means 9-1-1 professionals and emergency responders lack the advanced communications tools and cybersecurity resources they need to best protect life and property. NG9-1-1 will begin saving lives in our communities the moment it is deployed.

Achieving NG9-1-1 as soon as possible is a national security imperative, for the following reasons:

1. Enhanced Response to Disasters and National-level Threats

During natural disasters or terrorist attacks, time is of the essence and critical decisions need to be made with the best information available. The current 9-1-1 system is limited to voice calls and basic text messages, preventing citizens from sharing multimedia content and other information that could provide real-time actionable intelligence to emergency responders. Upgrading 9-1-1 systems to allow for the exchange of data, photos, and videos will provide



local, state, and national officials with improved situational awareness, resulting in faster and more effective responses and better outcomes for the public and first responders.

2. Protection Against Cyberattacks, Including State-Sponsored Attacks

The current 9-1-1 system already suffers cyberattacks, which disrupt emergency response capabilities and put lives at risk. In most cases, a single 9-1-1 emergency communications center serves numerous responding agencies. Thus, an attack on a 9-1-1 center has a cascading effect on multiple emergency response chains, making it a prime target for cybercriminals and state-sponsored attacks. NG9-1-1 requires a modern cybersecurity architecture that provides end-to-end IP-based intrusion detection and prevention capabilities. Federal funding is needed to implement this upgrade on a national scale and ensure that emergency services are available when they are needed most.

3. Support for National Defense Efforts

The 9-1-1 system is an important part of the nation's defense infrastructure. In the event of a national emergency or attack, the first line of defense is 9-1-1. Multiple civilian and defense agencies and departments would be involved in the response effort. The capabilities of a fully implemented NG9-1-1 network would be vital to improving coordination and ensuring clear, secure, and resilient communications capabilities for national security and defense.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and the committee to finish the job and enact this needed legislation.

Respectfully,

Mel Maier
Spokesman
Public Safety Next Generation 9-1-1 Coalition

Coalition Members:

Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials, International
Fraternal Order of Police
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Chiefs of Police
Major Cities Chiefs Association
Major County Sheriffs of America
Metropolitan Fire Chiefs Association
National Association of State EMS Officials
National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives
National Sheriffs' Association