

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 21, 2015

The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20536

57

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write regarding recent FairPoint Communications service outages that have impacted the Vermont E911 system and public safety agencies in both Vermont and New Hampshire.

As you may be aware, the majority of FairPoint's workforce in Vermont and New Hampshire has been on strike since October 17, 2014. Since this labor impasse began, FairPoint's networks and equipment have failed with increasing frequency and complaints from the company's customers have soared. We are particularly alarmed that problems with FairPoint's network have caused service outages for police departments, fire departments, and other critical public safety agencies across both New Hampshire and Vermont.

For example, a November 28 hardware failure – that was unrelated to weather events – caused an almost six-hour outage of Vermont's E-911 system. FairPoint's failure to report, respond and repair the equipment failure in a timely manner resulted in more than 80 missed calls from Vermonters to emergency dispatchers at the State Police, Montpelier City Police, and Vermont Gas, potentially endangering lives and property across the state. As a result of this outage, the Vermont Department of Public Service has initiated a service quality investigation. In New Hampshire, a December 3 service failure resulted in a four-hour outage in 911 service in Portsmouth.

Any 911 call that is not connected to emergency responders is a matter of significant concern and potentially serious consequence, which is why we very much appreciate the FCC's recent focus on addressing vulnerabilities in critical emergency communications networks to reduce 911 outages. Consistent with that effort, and given FairPoint's critical role supporting emergency communications throughout Vermont and New Hampshire, we respectfully request that the FCC evaluate whether FairPoint remains capable of providing emergency communications services that our citizens and first responders can depend on in times of crisis. We hope that the FCC will act swiftly in this regard, particularly considering the frequent inclement weather in Northern New England during winter and the potential for both further damage to FairPoint's network and weather-related public safety emergencies.

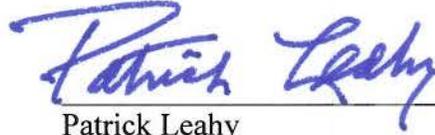
We urge you to immediately request that FairPoint provide the Federal Communications Commission with a full assessment of the causes of the recent system outages in Vermont and

New Hampshire and to identify remedies to prevent similar problems in the future. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Peter Welch  
Member of Congress



Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress