

**Statement of
James Arden Barnett, Jr.
Chief, Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau
Federal Communications Commission**

Keeping Us Safe: The Need for a Nationwide Public Safety Network

**Before the
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

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Good morning Chairman Rockefeller, Ranking Member Hutchison and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the need for a nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network.

The need for such a network is indisputable. We can measure in lost American lives and property the cost of not having a nationwide, interoperable public safety network, and unfortunately, each disaster in America reminds us again. This Committee showed great foresight last year when it charged the FCC with the responsibility of preparing a National Broadband Plan, including a specific direction to address “a plan for use of broadband infrastructure and services in advancing . . . public safety and homeland security.”

We approached this responsibility very seriously, and we pursued it with rigor. Our aim was to approach each potential option – somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 different network concepts – with an open mind and in consultation with all stakeholders. Our quest required literally hundreds of meetings and communications with public safety leaders and months of in-depth research with experts across the Nation, including engineers, scientists, economists, industry leaders, and federal partners. The foundation of the network must be facts and data. The three elements that, in my view, are essential are: (1) the network must be truly interoperable; (2) it must be nationwide, because if it is not, then it is not truly interoperable; and (3) the network must be feasible, not only from an engineering standpoint, but also from an economic standpoint. The Nation must be able to afford to build and operate the network, companies must have the economic incentive to provide cost effective equipment, devices and services to support it, and public safety must be able to afford to operate the network.

The standard for interoperability should be that when a first responder picks up a broadband device he or she should be able to communicate with the right people and have the right information instantaneously, no matter where they are located. However, as past experience has demonstrated, this is a very hard goal to achieve. The Chair and Vice Chair of the 9/11 Commission recently stated that “the 9/11 Commission on which we served concluded that the absence of interoperable communications capabilities among public safety organizations at the local, state and federal levels was a problem of the highest order.” To address interoperability, a number of actions are being taken. First, the Commission has formed the Emergency Response Interoperability Center to establish a technical framework to ensure interoperability. Second, the FCC, along with public safety, its federal partners and industry stakeholders are working to ensure that as the network is deployed and continues to evolve interoperability will always be job one.

Providing network coverage in rural and less densely populated portions of the country is also an imperative for true interoperability. Network deployment in rural areas needs to keep pace with the rest of the country, including our big cities. Accordingly, it is important that adequate public funding be considered to ensure that no area of the United States is left behind, with the goal of covering 99% of the country’s population.

Interoperability costs money, and we believe that the single greatest challenge to ever having a nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network is funding, to both cover the cost of building the network and the cost of operating it.. This is why we prepared a detailed cost model for the plan, which we subsequently published in a white paper. I urge the Committee to take advantage of this research, as well as our findings on network capacity.

Based on our research, we determined that public safety should have a dedicated network, owned and controlled by public safety, and the core of this network should be the spectrum that the Congress has already dedicated to public safety. We have determined that this spectrum, with the latest engineering and cellular architecture, will perform as 160 megahertz would if you used the out-dated technology public safety is currently using. This core will meet the needs of public safety for day-to-day operations and for most emergencies.

Unfortunately, America will inevitably face not just day-to-day public safety needs but the needs caused by occasional major disasters, and accordingly the public safety network must be able to expand its capacity to deal with extreme circumstances. For that reason, the FCC recommended that public safety be able to roam over to commercial networks with priority access to provide as much as 60 additional megahertz of spectrum. This concept has the additional advantage of providing two or more back-up networks, and therefore much more resiliency and redundancy than we currently have.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, let me assure you that our top priority in this matter is the same as yours, a nationwide, interoperable public safety broadband network, and we will work with you, our federal partners, the states, the public safety community and other interested parties to achieve that goal under any circumstances.

I should note one last important point. Not only is time of the essence because of the need for us all to be prepared for the next catastrophic event, but also because more time in this regard will cost the federal government far more money. The commercial 4G broadband networks are being planned and built. The first public safety 700 megahertz

networks are being prepared for deployment as early as this year. Delaying the funding of the network actually will increase the cost of the network.

In closing, I appreciate the Committee's leadership for taking up this important issue. The costs of not being prepared are too great. The costs of not seizing this technological opportunity cannot be recovered. There are vast areas of agreement on the plan for a public safety broadband network, and I know that we can build from that agreement to develop together a smart plan going forward that meets the needs of our Nation's first responders. I look forward to working with public safety, our federal partners and you on this important endeavor. Thank you for this opportunity to talk to you.