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Federal Communications Commission

National League of Cities
Public Safety and Crime Prevention Steering Committee
Information Technology and Communications Steering
Committee

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Good morning and thank you, Mayor (Dennis) Gillette, for your kind introduction. It's a pleasure to be here today. I'd like to thank Mayor Gillette, Erich Hackney, and Kyle Jones, (chair and vice-chairs of the Public Safety and Crime Prevention committee) and Kevin Kramer, Andy Huckaba ("Huck-ah-bah), and Vivian Wilhoite ("Will-hoy-t") (chair and vice-chairs of the Information Technology and Communications committee) for allowing me to speak with you today on important public safety communications issues which affect all of us.

I bring greetings on behalf of FCC Chairman Genachowski, the other FCC Commissioners and the staff of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau. As Dennis said, I'm Chief of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau, which was created in 2006 following Hurricane Katrina because of the recognition that greater focus was required by the FCC on public safety communications. I became the Chief of the Bureau last July, and my tenure thus far has been challenging and exciting and is definitely keeping me on my toes.

It has been said that “good government begins at home” and that’s evident by the august group represented here today. Thank you for the work you do daily in your communities. As you heard from my bio, before coming to Washington I practiced law in Mississippi and represented state and local government entities, so I know how hard you all work to make your communities safe havens for your citizens. I appreciate your dedication to public service and your interest in hearing about the FCC’s activities and how we can work together on public safety endeavors.

As Bureau Chief, I am responsible for assisting the Chairman and the Commission in their public safety mission, focusing on the development of rapid, reliable, and ubiquitous communications technologies to promote public safety and homeland security. To that end, the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau focuses on areas such as broadband technologies and issues, 9-1-1 services, interoperability, protecting communications infrastructure, cyber security, ensuring the availability of communications as part of emergency preparedness and disaster response, and outreach on communications issues to the public safety community.

I'm sure you are all familiar with the Commission's overall focus on networks and communications. The FCC's responsibilities include ensuring that the country's spectrum resources are used in an effective and efficient manner and that the nation's communications networks are interoperable and are able to operate in times of emergency, as well as on a day-to-day basis. This includes both the communications networks upon which American citizens rely, as well as the communications networks upon which our first responders and medical communities depend -- and many times those communications networks are one and the same.

As we look for ways to address these challenges, the potential solution that we see having the greatest beneficial impact across the board is the development of and use of broadband technologies and innovations that are transforming the communications world. If we can foster greater public safety use of broadband technologies and innovations, the potential benefits are enormous. To that end, much of the Bureau's time as of late has been and continues to be spent on the Commission's number one priority, creating the National Broadband Plan, which will be delivered to Congress this week. The Plan will address a

wide range of communications issues, but I'd like to focus my remarks today on the public safety aspects of the Plan.

Everyone in this room can appreciate the fact that safety and security are vital to America's prosperity. With that said, broadband technologies and innovations can help public safety personnel prevent emergencies and respond swiftly, efficiently and effectively when they occur. Broadband can also provide the public with new ways of calling for help and receiving emergency information. These are key components of the public safety portion of the National Broadband Plan.

A cutting edge public safety communications system utilizing broadband technologies will bring many benefits:

- It will allow first responders anywhere in the nation to send and receive critical voice, video and data which will aid them in saving lives, reducing injuries and preventing acts of crime and terror.

- It will ensure that all Americans can access emergency services quickly and send and receive vital information, regardless of how it is transmitted.
- It will revolutionize the way Americans are notified about emergencies and disasters so they receive information vital to their safety.
- It will reduce threats to e-commerce and other Internet-based applications by helping ensure the security of the nation's broadband networks.

As you are well aware, today first responders from different jurisdictions and agencies often cannot communicate during emergencies; 911 systems still operate on circuit-switched networks; and federal, Tribal, state and local governments use outdated alerting systems to inform the public during emergencies. We cannot maintain the status quo on these issues “because that’s the way they’ve always been done.” The way things have always been done is not acceptable in a nation in which technological advances are happening daily and in which the public is relying more and more on those technological advances. The public

safety community has to move forward in meeting these new needs and expectations. The public expects, and frankly deserves, a public safety communications system that allows them to reach public safety in an emergency regardless of the type of device they are using or the type of data they are transmitting. They also expect and deserve a system within which first responders of differing disciplines and jurisdictions can talk with each other in the event of a man-made or natural disaster. Lives depend on these abilities.

Broadband technologies and innovations can help us in that regard, especially when it comes to creating a network by which first responders can effectively and efficiently communicate. For that reason, we believe the time is right for the creation of a nationwide interoperable public safety wireless broadband communications network, and we have recommended such in the National Broadband Plan.

In the Plan, we have suggested an approach that will first create an administrative system that ensures users of the public safety broadband spectrum have adequate capacity required for such a network and can leverage commercial technologies to capture economies of scale and

scope. This approach will allow public safety to realize the benefits of commercial technologies which will reduce costs and ensure the network evolves as technology improves. We also realize this concept isn't a panacea and that there are other things that must happen with this network for it to meet all the communications needs of public safety. For example, we envision that public safety should be able to roam and obtain priority access on commercial broadband networks to ensure resiliency, capacity and redundancy. Of course, this would happen with commercial operators being compensated at reasonable rates for this service.

As you are aware, past efforts to create a public safety narrowband interoperable voice network have failed. In 2007, the Commission adopted rules to promote the construction, deployment and operation of a nationwide wireless 700 MHz public safety broadband network by creating a mandatory partnership between the public safety community and the private licensee of a 700 MHz commercial spectrum allocation known as the "D block." The Commission subsequently held an auction in which the D block spectrum failed to attract a required minimum bid. There are many reasons why this auction failed, and we

learned some valuable lessons from that experience. For example, we realize the Commission should encourage, not require, incentive-based partnerships that can ensure success in certain instances. We want to encourage network solutions that reduce costs and provide options for the public safety community in leveraging commercial networks, private networks or both. New approaches should also provide the public safety community with competitive choices among commercial partners. Ultimately, a more flexible set of rules should allow a better balance between the needs of the public safety community and the companies that will partner with them to build this network. This approach offers public safety a fresh opportunity to achieve advanced interoperability now without having to wait years for the creation of a stand-alone public safety network.

To get the proposed nationwide interoperable public safety wireless broadband communications network off on the right foot, the National Broadband Plan will call for the creation of an Emergency Response Interoperability Center (ERIC) to ensure applications, devices and networks all work together. ERIC will be housed at the FCC, and both the Department of Homeland Security and the National Institute

of Standards and Technology will contribute to ERIC's functions in their areas of expertise. The goal of ERIC is to create an environment in which first responders can communicate seamlessly. ERIC will set the course for interoperability immediately and will ensure that we get this network right from the start. Focusing on interoperability from the beginning will help the public safety broadband network overcome difficulties faced by earlier interoperability efforts. This time we want to "begin with the end in mind" and avoid creating disparate public safety communications systems or networks that will not interoperate or that are not as technologically advanced as they should be. It's time to move forward, and ERIC will help us map the way.

Our vision for ERIC is that it will become a part of the nationwide public safety communications structure. We are not looking for it to replace any existing agency or entity, but are simply looking to assist an already vibrant community that is working day in and day out to improve public safety communications. ERIC will enhance efforts to move public safety communications forward as we strive to implement broadband technologies and innovations.

On another note, we are aware that whenever new ideas and regulations come out of the federal government they can be seen as “unfunded mandates.” This is why, in the Plan, we have stressed the creation of a grant program which will provide federal support to local efforts to fund capital expenses and operating expenses of the aforementioned network. In our view, the grant program must provide public safety network operators with long term support and flexibility to form appropriate partnerships with systems integrators and other vendors to ensure proper deployment of the network. Many jurisdictions will need new or additional resources to create or upgrade their communications systems before their public safety entities would be able to utilize the nationwide interoperable public safety wireless broadband communications network we are recommending. We understand that and took that into consideration as we prepared our funding recommendations that have been included in the Plan.

I’d like to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work being done at the National League of Cities to promote and strengthen opportunities and leadership in cities throughout the country. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, “good

government begins at home” and it’s evident by your attendance and interest here that you take that thought to heart. I’m sure you have all heard the saying “I’m from Washington and I’m here to help” and I think we have all rolled our eyes at that thought. However, I am here to tell you that we at the Commission and the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau are here to help. We believe in being responsive to state and local entities and have a very strong outreach program in which one of our target groups is state and local governments. We take that responsibility very seriously and understand that in order for us to do our job well we have to be in touch with and listen to local governments. After all, your public safety agencies and 911 services (or public safety answering points) are a large part of our focus. We partner with state governments as well, but on a day-to-day basis, your agencies are the ones in the trenches responding to the daily calls for service from your citizens. We understand that and are committed to keeping the lines of communication open.

With that said, I would invite you to visit our webpage to learn more about what we offer to local governments. One tool in particular you will find very useful is our

Clearinghouse which has been established for the collection, evaluation and dissemination of public safety communications information. You will find best practices, grant information, emergency plans, guidelines, handbooks and reference materials in one convenient location. This is just one example of our efforts to help public safety entities.

Please also know that bureau staff is also available to speak with you about any public safety communications questions you or your public safety agencies may have. If we can't answer your particular question, I guarantee we can at least steer you in the right direction. We strive to be responsive and take pride in the relationships and partnerships we foster, and I invite you to be a part of that.

Again, thank you for having me here today. I look forward to answering any questions you have for me.