

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Legislative Solutions to Public Safety Communications in the United States”

December 16, 2025

I am pleased the Subcommittee is holding this hearing today to discuss legislation to make emergency communications more accessible and reliable for all Americans.

For years, I have consistently advocated for passing and fully funding the Next Generation 9-1-1 Act. There are thousands of emergency communications centers across the nation and too many of them still rely on legacy communications infrastructure that was first installed about 60 years ago. While I am glad to see the Subcommittee consider the bill here today, I must reiterate my disappointment with Republicans’ decision to use spectrum auction proceeds to pay for tax breaks for billionaires in their Big Ugly Bill instead of investing in modern public safety communications infrastructure. These funds are hard to come by and the task of funding this effort is now that much more difficult as a result.

Every one of our nation’s 9-1-1 centers should have the best technology we have at our disposal. By equipping them with modern infrastructure and state-of-the-art equipment, we can help 9-1-1 telecommunicators assess the nature and location of an emergency more quickly with better information. This information in turn helps police, fire, and emergency medical services respond to a situation more safely and effectively.

Equally as important as the benefits of Next Generation 9-1-1 to first responders is the increased access it grants to the public to reach emergency assistance. These upgrades allow Americans to communicate with 9-1-1 the same way we communicate regularly with our friends and family beyond traditional phone calls. Now the public will be able to send pictures and video to 9-1-1 and, with some applications, create a live video feed from their location which dispatchers can use to inform their work, and first responders can use to scout the scene before they arrive.

While I am glad that some jurisdictions have begun to prioritize these investments already, I look forward to continuing our work to fully fund the nationwide deployment of Next Generation 9-1-1 so that all communities have modern equipment in place to better protect the people they serve.

And as we look at modernizing this equipment, we must also make our communications networks more resilient so that our constituents always have access to emergency information and services when it matters most. When Superstorm Sandy hit my district in 2012, my constituents were left without communications capabilities in some places for weeks. A lot has changed for the better since Sandy, but there is more work to do to ensure our communications networks are constructed with resiliency and redundancy in mind so that no one is left in the dark during a major disaster.

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Finally, we have work to do in this Committee to address the impending sunset of the First Responder Network Authority, or FirstNet, which is set to expire a little over a year from now. It is important that we reauthorize FirstNet and I look forward to working together in a bipartisan manner to ensure first responders do not lose access to this important service.

With that, I yield the remainder of my time to Representative Carter of Louisiana.