



COMMITTEE ON *DEMOCRATS*  
**ENERGY & COMMERCE**  
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Statement of Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr., as prepared for delivery  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Hearing on “Progress Toward a Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network”**

Thank you Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Eshoo for holding this hearing today. And thanks to our witnesses for being here.

Many of us have been talking about the importance of public safety communications for a while, so we tend to forget that FirstNet is barely three years old. It was just a few years ago when a broad bipartisan coalition came together in this committee with a vision for a nationwide wireless broadband network for first responders.

But we lose track of just how young FirstNet is because it has already accomplished so much. It started with literally nothing but a bold mission—no board, no employees, no money. Very few technology startups make it past this stage. That is not the case for FirstNet.

And now, FirstNet’s board is comprised of seasoned communications veterans and public safety officials. It’s a group that would make any company proud. And while the ranks of its employees are still growing, the staff more closely resembles a group from a technology power house rather than one from a government office. This hard-charging staff has been crisscrossing the country making sure everyone with an opinion has their voice heard.

Most encouraging, we are actually about to see the first deployments. FirstNet’s five Early Builder Projects—including one in New Jersey—are already providing important lessons. They are the proofs of concept necessary to show first responders that this will indeed work. I’m disappointed that Governor Christie refused to permit JerseyNet to testify today. The project is a one of the Governor’s few successes and this Committee would have benefitted from hearing firsthand about their deployment.

Of course, as with any new venture, FirstNet has faced some hard times. But it has not shied away from these challenges. For example, GAO recently issued a report concluding that FirstNet could use more extensive internal controls and clearer metrics of success for early

deployments. FirstNet's Chair—Sue Swenson—agreed and quickly acted to implement these recommendations.

Similarly, the Department of Commerce's Office of Inspector found that in its very early days, FirstNet should have been more open. But now most observers describe FirstNet as a model of transparency.

I am confident that FirstNet's board will continue in this tradition, maintain these improvements and continue its good work moving forward. The importance of this task requires no less.

So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and hearing more about the progress they are making.

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