

Documents for the Record – 02.04.26

1. A January 21, 2026, letter from police organizations to Chairman Guthrie.
2. A January 28, 2026, letter from the Bull Moose Project to Richard Hudson.
3. Testimony for the record from Thomas Schatz
4. A February 2, 2026, letter from Hamilton County Emergency Communications to the Committee.
5. A January 21, 2026, letter from National Grange.
6. A February 2, 2026, letter from the International Association of Fire Chiefs.
7. A February 3, 2026, letter from the National Fraternal Order of Police.
8. A January 16, 2026, letter from New Jersey State Fire Chief's Association.
9. Recommendations for Preserving the Federal FirstNet from public safety organizations.
10. A February 3, 2026, letter from the Taxpayers Protection Alliance to Subcommittee leadership.
11. A February 3, 2026, letter from PSBTA.
12. A letter from Lee H. Davidson, Chief Deputy of the Ripley County Sheriff's office.



The Honorable Brett Guthrie, Chairman
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 21, 2026

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member,

As your committee considers reauthorization legislation for the FirstNet Authority (FNA) prior to 2027, we urge you to consider critical updates that will improve the effectiveness of the program through enhanced oversight, accountability, competition, and transparency regarding the billions of dollars that it spends. To be clear, we strongly support the FirstNet concept and seek to improve its structure. Our primary objective in seeking these changes is to ensure that the FirstNet Authority is working to the benefit of *all* public-safety users.

Congress's original vision of FirstNet, a standalone, publicly-owned network exclusively for public safety use, was laudable. The reality of the effectiveness of this model is now apparent: it has not worked as envisioned. The reauthorization process represents an opportunity to improve this critical program.

First, it is imperative that any reauthorization measure does not permanently extend the FirstNet mandate. As we have seen over the past decade, technology and the needs of the public safety community have evolved dramatically. FirstNet should be revisited and updated over time, not put on a permanent autopilot. We urge that FirstNet's reauthorization remain on a Congressionally mandated cycle.

Second, we urge the Congress to ensure that the FirstNet program benefit all of public safety, not just the customers of a single commercial carrier. The fact that all of the FirstNet Authority's multi-billion-dollar spending has gone to only one carrier, AT&T, has been exposed as problematic in recent years. When the AT&T network went down in February of 2024, AT&T's FirstNet customers lost service. This is a risk our first responders simply cannot take. They need consistency and reliability for their communications networks. Many of our members now depend on multiple carriers to ensure reliability and resiliency. In the years since FirstNet's contract was awarded to AT&T, other carriers have developed their own public safety offerings. This competition has resulted in a better product for our public safety users. Congress should ensure that all infrastructure paid for with FNA funds is being used to the benefit of all public safety users, not just the customers of a single carrier.

Accountability must also be prioritized in the new reauthorization measure. In recent years, the Inspector General for the Department of Commerce has issued multiple reports highlighting a lack of transparency and accountability within FirstNet and particularly with regard to AT&T's compliance with the FirstNet contract, including accusations that requested data was altered or not provided. This is unacceptable. To this end, we urge policymakers to include enhanced reporting and accountability requirements in the reauthorization measure, including:

- Reporting on the use and capacity of Band 14.
- Providing a full range and categorization of FirstNet subscribers including public safety, fire, EMS, private companies, etc.
- Disallow the use of government funds to support contractors, events, and marketing for any carrier.

Finally, we urge that policymakers include a provision that repeals grant/procurement requirements that favors AT&T given its exclusive partnership with FirstNet. This practice is outdated given the advancement of public safety communications options, and ultimately benefits a single corporate entity, not the public safety community.

As previously stated, our goal in making these recommendations is developing a stronger, more resilient public safety communications network. We believe that the experience of the past decade makes clear that changes must be made.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Norman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeff Norman
Milwaukee Police Department
President, Major Cities Chiefs Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris West', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sheriff Chris West
Canadian County, OK
President, National Sheriffs' Association

CC: The Honorable Richard Hudson, Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

The Honorable Doris Matsui, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

THE
**BULL
MOOSE**
PROJECT

January 28, 2026

Office of Congressman Richard Hudson
2112 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C.
20510

Dear Chairman Hudson:

September 11 saw emergency services from around the country volunteer to play a role in saving lives. But it also bore unfortunate witness to the fact that there was not, at the time, any platform to aid interoperability between state-based first responders. It took years — almost a decade — to fix this, but the hard work paid off with FirstNet's establishment in 2012, as part of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act.

FirstNet has operated as a self-described "fast lane" for public safety, ensuring that first responders' communications are prioritized. It also provides special online applications for information sharing, location services, and more. On top of this, the government successfully got private companies to buy in, specifically from AT&T, which has continued to launch cell sites and make other upgrades to the network.

This is easily the best of government: identifying a problem, coming together to create a bipartisan solution that actually works, and encouraging private industry to utilize their skills and technologies at no cost to the taxpayer. It is a model for how the government should act after a crisis.

But, as you know, congressional authorization for FirstNet is set to sunset in 2027, ending the program in its entirety. This would mean the near-decade of discussions and decade and a half of operation will all have been for naught.

Practically no one wants this to happen. The International Association of Chiefs of Police and the International Association of Fire Chiefs support it being permanently funded. The Congressional Fire Services Institute is in full support, as is the Government Accountability Office, which highlights \$15 billion in savings over its 15-year history. The Bull Moose Project, where I work as a policy analyst, has also called for FirstNet's renewal. And over a dozen more organizations sent a letter to congressional leaders earlier this year asking for FirstNet's ensured stability.

House leaders, including Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC), held a hearing in early September on next-gen 911 services, including on the necessity of reauthorizing

FirstNet. We are thrilled that the Senate is following suit. Witnesses at the House hearing, including sheriffs and public safety experts, agreed on the need to reauthorize FirstNet. And the representatives present seemed to concur with such a necessity, a good sign.

Congress has about a year to reauthorize FirstNet, and we believe The First Responder Network Authority Reauthorization Act is the perfect vehicle to get this done.

Back in 2012, there may have been a question as to whether or not FirstNet would work. In 2026, we know the answer: It works, and it works extremely well. We are thrilled that yourself, Congressman Guthrie, and the whole of the House of Representatives is taking this matter so seriously. Thank you for doing the work of the American people.

Sincerely,

Anthony J. Constantini
Policy Analyst, Bull Moose Project

House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Hearing

Evaluating FirstNet: Performance, Accountability, and Reauthorization

Testimony for the Record
Thomas A. Schatz
President
Council for Citizens Against Government Waste

February 4, 2026

Chairman Hudson, Ranking Member Matsui, and members of the committee, my name is Thomas A. Schatz, and I am the president of the Council for Citizens Against Government Waste (CCAGW). I offer this written testimony for your review and ask that it be included in the record regarding the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) and appreciate the committee's review of the program as part of the reauthorization process.

CCAGW is a private, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization representing more than one million members and supporters nationwide. Founded in 1984, CCAGW is the lobbying arm of Citizens Against Government Waste, which was established to follow up on the work of the President's Private Sector Survey on Cost Control, also known as the Grace Commission, to eliminate waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement and inefficiency in government.

The lack of interoperability of first responders' communications systems was one of the reasons the 9/11 Commission included in its recommendations the need to provide "close coordination during an actual incident." The commission noted that, "The inability to communicate was a critical element at the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and Somerset County, Pennsylvania, crash sites, where multiple agencies and multiple jurisdictions responded. The occurrence of this problem at three very different sites is strong evidence that compatible and adequate communications among public safety organizations at the local, state, and federal levels remains an important problem."¹

Congress sought to address this problem by including the establishment of FirstNet in the 2012 Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act.² FirstNet received an allocation of \$7 billion from the AWS-3 spectrum auction to build a communications network solely dedicated for use by first responders.³ FirstNet was launched in 2018, and its authorization expires on February 22, 2027. Early consideration of reauthorization is critical to provide certainty for continued

¹ 9/11 Commission Report, Chapter 12, "What to Do? A Global Strategy," https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report_Ch12.pdf.

² Public Law 112-96, Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, February 22, 2012, <https://www.congress.gov/112/plaws/publ96/PLAW-112publ96.pdf>.

³ Stew Magnuson, "FirstNet Fully Funded After Lucrative Spectrum Auction," National Defense, April 1, 2015, <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2015/4/1/2015april-firstnet-fully-funded-after-lucrative-spectrum-auction>.

interoperability of communications among first responders so they can safely carry out their missions.

FirstNet is available in all 50 states, with customized plans for first responders.⁴ There are more than 7.5 million FirstNet connections, covering more than 2.99 million square miles.⁵ In 2024, FirstNet was used during the multi-agency efforts to combat the wildfires sweeping across western states, including the Park Fire in California; the Lee Falls Fire in Oregon; and the Pioneer Fire in Washington.⁶

The system has also enabled firefighters in Brooks County, Texas to deploy a SatCOLT vehicle with its own cell site in support of more than 40 agencies and public safety personnel; allowed the Oxford, Alabama, police department to obtain a compact rapid deployable, miniature cell tower to assist first responders during emergencies in more rural areas; and helped solve Elizabeth, Colorado's "patchy or nonexistent service" by installing mobile data terminals in ambulances and fire apparatus.⁷

On February 29, 2024, AT&T, the winning bidder for the FirstNet buildout, announced it would be paying more than \$5.1 billion over five years to the FirstNet Authority, which plans to use the funds to support the "\$8 billion commitment to enhance the nationwide public-safety broadband network (NPSBN) that is being built and maintained by AT&T." These sustainability investments by AT&T will total \$18 billion over the 25-year life of its contract with FirstNet Authority.⁸

Providing first responders with continued and improved interoperable communications is critical to their safety and the lives of those they are protecting and rescuing. They are the first to go into a dangerous situation and are often the last to leave. The brave Americans who serve as first responders should be thanked every day for their hard work and diligent service to the nation.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this written testimony. Reauthorization of FirstNet as soon as possible will help provide first responders the certainty that they will be able to continue to do their jobs to protect and save without having to worry about interoperable communications.

⁴ FirstNet Authority, "FirstNet: The History of our Nation's Public Safety Network,"

<https://firstnet.gov/about/history>.

⁵ FirstNet, Built with AT&T, "America's first responder network," <https://www.firstnet.com/>.

⁶ The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, "Park Fire," July 29, 2025,

<https://www.fire.ca.gov/incidents/2024/7/24/park-fire>; Oregon Public Broadcasting, "Lee Falls Fire burns 280 acres, triggers evacuation order near Gaston," August 8, 2024, <https://www.opb.org/article/2024/08/08/lee-falls-fire-gaston/>; National Park Service, "North Cascades Park Closures: Fire Closures – Trail, Area, and Camp Closures," August 28, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/noca/planyourvisit/fire-closures.htm>.

⁷ FirstNet Authority, "Episode 70: Fighting wildfires in Southern Texas with FirstNet," May 9, 2023,

<https://firstnet.gov/newsroom/podcast/episode-70-fighting-wildfires-southern-texas-firstnet>; "Episode 66: Oxford Police leverages compact rapid deployable to boost emergency comms in Alabama," November 10, 2022, <https://firstnet.gov/newsroom/podcast/episode-66-oxford-police-leverages-compact-rapid-deployable-boost-emergency-comms>; "Communicating Across Colorado's Plains with FirstNet," June 4, 2024, <https://firstnet.gov/newsroom/blog/communicating-across-colorados-plains-firstnet>.

⁸ Donny Jackson, "AT&T filing with SEC outlines new payment schedule to FirstNet Authority," Urgent Communications, February 29, 2024, <https://urgentcomm.com/public-safety/at-t-filing-with-sec-outlines-new-payment-schedule-to-firstnet-authority>.

Board of Commissioners

Alicia Reece
Denise Driehaus
Stephanie Summerow Dumas

Administrator

Jeffrey W. Aluotto

Director

Andrew Knapp

February 2, 2026

TO: House Subcommittee on Communications And Technology
RE: Evaluating FirstNet: Performance, Accountability, and Reauthorization

I am writing on behalf of Hamilton County Emergency Communications to express our strong support for the FirstNet program and the reauthorization of the FirstNet Authority. We understand the House Energy & Commerce Communications and Technology Subcommittee has an upcoming hearing on FirstNet. Our agency relies on the FirstNet network, and we encourage you to support FirstNet Authority Reauthorization and the continued success of this critical public safety program.

We depend on FirstNet to help our responders reliably communicate during daily operations and during emergencies. Hamilton County is fortunate to support major events and venues, including MLB and NFL operations, that draw large crowds and can stress or congest cellular networks in localized areas. When first responders deploy into these environments, they must be able to rely on high-quality cellular voice and data to maintain situational awareness, coordinate response, and mitigate risk to the public and our personnel.

In addition, when Hamilton County has needed added support during high-profile incidents, FirstNet has consistently been there with boots on the ground to provide technology and resources that directly strengthen incident operations. From Towers on Wheels (COWs) to Compact Rapid Deployable (CRD) equipment, FirstNet's personnel and capabilities have answered the call and helped ensure successful outcomes for our community.

Timely action on FirstNet reauthorization is a public safety priority. FirstNet is critical to our state and nation's emergency readiness and response, which is why I respectfully urge you to support FirstNet Authority Reauthorization and the continued success of this program.

Thank you for your continued support of first responders and the communities we serve. Please feel free to contact me if I can be a resource to your office or provide additional local public safety perspective.

Sincerely,



Andrew Knapp

Director, Hamilton County Emergency Communications



NATIONAL GRANGE

Elevating rural interests since 1867

1616 H St. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006

January 21, 2026

Hello,

My name is Christine Hamp, and I'm President of the National Grange and a fourth-generation Granger who served as a chief officer in the fire service and more than 30 years in state and local government.



In light of the upcoming "On the Front Lines of Connectivity: Examining FirstNet's Role in Public Safety" hearing on Tuesday, January 27, I want to make sure that you saw my [op-ed](#) that was published in the [Spokesman Review](#) (see below), calling on Congress to reauthorize FirstNet. It sheds light on the importance of the reliable communications network designed by first responders for first responders, especially those living in rural areas.

Sincerely,

Christine E. Hamp, President
National Grange

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

This column reflects the opinion of the writer.

[Learn about the differences between a news story and an opinion column.](#)

OPINION > GUEST OPINION

Christine E. Hamp: Public safety does not end at the city limits

Tue., Aug. 26, 2025



By **Christine E. Hamp**

Five years ago, the Bertschi Road Fire burned in Klickitat County in rural Washington state. The terrain was unforgiving, the flames unpredictable, and the first responders faced the added danger of having little to no cellular coverage. Communication was spotty at best, and without it, coordination can collapse, putting lives in danger.

But then, FirstNet made the difference. Crews deployed a Satellite Cell on Light Truck – a portable cell tower built specifically for first responders – and suddenly they had the lifeline they needed. That connection enabled firefighters to communicate with each other, share information, and ultimately contain and extinguish the fire.

I can't help but wonder: What if they hadn't had that tool? What if the fire burned unchecked because responders couldn't connect? The story could have ended in tragedy.

This is why Congress must reauthorize FirstNet – because it is the only nationwide public safety network designed by first responders, for first responders. When every second counts, there is no substitute.

Rural communities are all too familiar with this reality. Emergencies don't stop at the city limits – and neither should public safety. When disasters strike in small towns, on farms

or in remote canyons, families deserve the same protection as those in downtown neighborhoods.

FirstNet ensures that happens. It gives police, firefighters and emergency medical services secure, prioritized communications when commercial networks are overwhelmed or down. It provides deployable assets – trucks, drones and portable towers – that can be on the ground within hours. It even delivers coverage in places where cell service has never reached before. That’s not just progress; that’s lifesaving infrastructure.

I spent more than 30 years in public safety and local government, including several years on Type 1 and Type 3 incident management teams in northeast Washington and the Pacific Northwest. I have seen firsthand what happens when communication fails – and what happens when FirstNet succeeds. It has transformed emergency response.

And it’s not just for “the big one.” From wildfires to tornadoes, search-and-rescue to active shooters, FirstNet is the backbone that lets responders talk, coordinate, and protect lives every day. It even extends to utilities, transportation workers, and health care partners, because emergencies are never handled by one agency alone.

Here’s the bottom line: unless Congress acts, FirstNet’s authorization will expire in 2027. Walking away now would dismantle more than a decade of progress and put lives – especially rural lives – at risk.

The Grange was founded on the principle of giving voice to rural America. Today, that means speaking with one voice to say: FirstNet works, and we cannot afford to lose it.

Congress must rise to the occasion. Public safety is not negotiable, and it must not end at the city limits.

Christine E. Hamp is a Washington native, raised on a dairy farm. She is a fourth-generation Granger and served as a chief officer in the fire service for more than 30 years in state and local government. Hamp lives in a rural area west of Spokane, Washington, and serves as national president of National Grange.



International Association of Fire Chiefs

8251 Greensboro Drive, Suite 650 • McLean, VA 22102

Tel: 703.273.0911 • IAFC.org

February 2, 2026

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Guthrie and Ranking Member Pallone:

Attached, please find principles for preserving the federal First Responder Network (FirstNet) Authority as agreed to by national organizations representing fire, emergency medical services, law enforcement, state and local emergency managers, and local governments. These organizations represent the Americans who use the federal FirstNet network every day.

We would like to request that these principles be included in the record of the February 4 hearing on the federal FirstNet network.

Thank you for your support for America's first responders!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "S. Locke", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Fire Chief Steven Locke
First Vice President
International Association of Fire Chiefs

cc: The Honorable Richard Hudson, Chairman, House Committee on Energy and Commerce,
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

The Honorable Doris Matsui, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce,
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE®

328 MASSACHUSETTS AVE., N.E.
WASHINGTON, DC 20002

PATRICK YOES
NATIONAL PRESIDENT

JIM PASCO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

3 February 2026

The Honorable S. Brett Guthrie
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Frank J. Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Guthrie and Representative Pallone,

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Fraternal Order of Police to advise you of our strong support for the swift reauthorization of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) in a way that upholds and bolsters its focus on public safety priorities. Our members, who serve on the front lines in communities throughout the nation, depend on FirstNet's reliable framework to perform their duties safely and effectively.

The foundation of FirstNet's success lies in its alignment with the practical demands of everyday public safety operations. This approach has positioned it as a benchmark for effective collaborations between government and private sectors. The FOP firmly backs the extension of FirstNet and initiatives to increase authentic representation from public safety leaders on its Board, with an emphasis on grassroots and local perspectives.

Created in 2012 within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), FirstNet has transformed emergency communications across the country. Following a competitive selection, AT&T emerged as the primary provider and secured a 25-year agreement in 2017. The network guarantees preferential treatment and override capabilities in crises, facilitating smooth collaboration among responders to safeguard lives and assets. With the February 2027 expiration quickly approaching, we commend the ongoing efforts to maintain this essential system for homeland security, crisis management, and routine public safety services.

FirstNet marks a significant leap forward in response capabilities, addressing the shortcomings revealed during the September 11, 2001, attacks. In partnership with AT&T, FirstNet now provides a specialized nationwide platform utilized by over 30,000 public safety groups and handling nearly eight million connections. Its reliability has been proven time and again in catastrophes, high-stakes events, and security operations. For instance, the December 2024 House Task Force analysis of the Butler, Pennsylvania, event emphasized that officers using FirstNet experienced no major disruptions in service, ensuring continuous high-priority links for numerous responders amid the turmoil. The Task Force's report noted that during the incident "law enforcement personnel with FirstNet cellular service did not have notable interference with their connectivity."

Ongoing legislative scrutiny has spotlighted FirstNet's accomplishments alongside areas ripe for enhancement. The 28 January 2026 Senate Subcommittee hearing on Telecommunications and Media, entitled "Frontline Connectivity: Assessing FirstNet's Impact on Public Safety," underscored its

-- BUILDING ON A PROUD TRADITION --

benefits while identifying paths for further development. Meanwhile, the House Committee's upcoming hearing, entitled "Assessing FirstNet: Effectiveness, Oversight, and Renewal," will have the opportunity to consider draft legislation, the "First Responder Network Authority Renewal Act" which will be introduced by Representatives Neal P. Dunn (R-FL) and Jennifer L. McClellan (D-VA).

The FOP acknowledges Congress's role in evaluating FirstNet's operations and identifying where improvements are needed. We will continue to share insights from law enforcement officers—whose lives depend on these critical communications systems—as deliberations proceed. We are, however, concerned that some provisions of the proposed bill might inadvertently weaken the key elements driving FirstNet's success. Certain clauses could impose redundant governmental oversight, heighten procedural burdens, and escalate expenses without tangible advantages for public safety. Overall, these alterations could blur FirstNet's primary objectives and introduce uncertainties that jeopardize emergency operations, community protection, and public safety.

The FOP supports robust accountability and transparency. Yet, elements of the draft could foster unnecessary administrative hurdles that slow down FirstNet's functionality. Its development and triumphs stem from direct responsiveness to users at the State and local levels.

FirstNet already faces rigorous scrutiny through yearly disclosures, evaluations, audits, and assessments by its Board, the Commerce Department's Inspector General, the GAO, Congress, NTIA, and the FCC. Introducing other redundancies would shift focus from technological advancements and upgrades to mere regulatory adherence, yielding no direct gains for public or officer safety.

Moreover, FirstNet operates in a vibrant market where rivals like Verizon Frontline and T-Mobile's priority services cater to many agencies. During last week's Senate hearing, Verizon's Cory Davis noted serving over 45,000 entities, including a dominant 61% in New Mexico. This rivalry highlights the need to keep FirstNet agile and dedicated.

Other provisions in the draft bill seem to broaden compatibility rules in manners that might compromise specialized systems and reduce priority for responders in critical moments. These issues recall the coordination gaps noted by the 9/11 Commission, which FirstNet was built to fix. Past Board Chairs have cautioned that integrating FirstNet into larger bureaucratic structures could revive old weaknesses, marginalize frontline input, and delay vital choices. Maintaining its standalone setup, with precise management tweaks, ensures it stays adaptable and attuned to safety needs.

Other provisions in the draft bill appear to expand interoperability mandates in ways that could erode dedicated infrastructure and dilute priority access for first responders during emergencies. This could impair Band 14's vital override functions, muddle leadership, and obscure responsibility lines. As Sheriff Michael Adkinson, Jr., Acting Chair of the FirstNet Authority (FNA) board, testified at the last week's Senate hearing, appropriate oversight is welcomed, but he cautioned against creating a diffusion of responsibility – what he described as a "tyranny of the commons...when it becomes everybody's responsibility it becomes no one's responsibility," which could weaken accountability and increase incentives to finger-point if failures occur.

As the committee begins consideration of this draft legislation, the FOP advises against unnecessary, overly prescriptive, or duplicative requirements that could hinder FirstNet's operational effectiveness. Proposals diverting investments from core improvements would erode the cost-effectiveness that has enabled taxpayer-free delivery of immense value to public safety.

We encourage the Committees to consider a clean reauthorization that eliminates the expiration clause and confines adjustments to those proven to fortify FirstNet's safety-oriented purpose. Thank you for your guidance and dedication to those who protect our nation. The FOP stands ready to further engage with the committee.

On behalf of the more than 382,000 members of the Fraternal Order of Police, I thank you all for taking into consideration our views on this matter. If I can provide any additional information about this bill, please do not hesitate to contact me or Executive Director Jim Pasco in our Washington, D.C. office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Yoes", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Yoes
National President

cc: Scott Hildebrand, President, Kentucky State Lodge
Shawn Helbig, National Trustee, Kentucky State Lodge
Bob Fox, President, New Jersey State Lodge
Kevin Vernon, National Trustee, New Jersey State Lodge



SINCE FEBRUARY 10, 1905



New Jersey State Fire Chief's Association

President

Frank Walters
311 Centre Avenue
Secaucus, NJ 07094
(201) 774-5660
E-mail:
FWalters@njchiefs.com

First Vice President

Robert Morris
2 Maryland Avenue
Whiting, NJ 08759
(732)232-1061
RMorris@njchiefs.com

Second Vice President

George Meredith
446 Broad Street
Beverly, NJ 08010
(609)694-9827
E-mail:
GMeredith@njchiefs.com

Secretary

Christopher H. Assenheimer
444 Central Avenue
Carlstadt, NJ 07072-1524
(201) 438-2603
E-mail:
CAssenheimer@njchiefs.com

Treasurer

Brian Valentino
103 Pension Road
Manalapan, NJ 07726-8401
(732)904-2953
Email:
BValentino@njchiefs.com

www.njchiefs.com

January 16, 2026

The Honorable Brett Guthrie

Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Hudson

Chair, Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

**Subject: Support for Reauthorization of the First Responder
Network Authority**

Dear Chair Guthrie and Chair Hudson:

Since 1905, The New Jersey Fire Chiefs Association has represented over 6000 fire service leaders from agencies across the state. Our members are committed to advancing the protection of life, property, and the environment through leadership, education, and advocacy. On behalf of our members, I write to express our strong support for the reauthorization of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet Authority).

As leaders of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce and its Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, you play a central role in ensuring the continuity and advancement of the nation's only dedicated public safety broadband network.

The FirstNet Authority was established by Congress in 2012 following communication challenges identified during major national emergencies, including the September 11, 2001, attacks. Congress created the FirstNet Authority within the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to provide first responders with a secure, interoperable, and resilient communications network designed specifically for public safety operations.

SINCE FEBRUARY 10, 1905



New Jersey State Fire Chief's Association

President

Frank Walters
311 Centre Avenue
Secaucus, NJ 07094
(201) 774-5660
E-mail:
FWalters@njchiefs.com

First Vice President

Robert Morris
2 Maryland Avenue
Whiting, NJ 08759
(732)232-1061
RMorris@njchiefs.com

Second Vice President

George Meredith
446 Broad Street
Beverly, NJ 08010
(609)694-9827
E-mail:
GMeredith@njchiefs.com

Secretary

Christopher H. Assenheimer
444 Central Avenue
Carlstadt, NJ 07072-1524
(201) 438-2603
E-mail:
CAssenheimer@njchiefs.com

Treasurer

Brian Valentino
103 Pension Road
Manalapan, NJ 07726-8401
(732)904-2953
Email:
BValentino@nchiefs.com

www.njchiefs.com

Since its inception, the FirstNet Authority has successfully met its congressional mandate. The nationwide network was completed on schedule and within budget, providing reliable, prioritized, and preemptive broadband communications to more than 30,000 public safety agencies across approximately 3.0 million square miles of coverage. It operates under a fiscally responsible, self-sustaining funding model, requiring no ongoing appropriations from Congress. It has been called the single most successful public private partnership in America.

The oversight structure of the FirstNet Authority Board, which includes both public safety and industry leaders, ensures accountability, transparency, and continued innovation. The Authority's success has resulted in a trusted ecosystem of public safety applications, devices, and solutions that enhance situational awareness and coordination during complex incidents.

Reauthorization of the FirstNet Authority before the 2027 deadline is essential to maintaining the operational integrity and modernization of this network. The United States Government Accountability Office has emphasized that failure to reauthorize the Authority would jeopardize the sustainability of the network and undermine the confidence of the first responder community.

New Jersey's fire service community has witnessed firsthand the operational value of FirstNet during response to numerous man-made, and natural disasters, along with numerous other everyday incidents both large and small. The ability to maintain dependable, prioritized communications across jurisdictions and disciplines has strengthened emergency response capabilities and saved many lives.

The New Jersey Fire Chiefs Association respectfully urges the Committee and Subcommittee to take prompt action to reauthorize the First Responder Network Authority. Doing so will reaffirm Congress's commitment to public safety and ensure that America's first responders continue to have the reliable and interoperable communications network they need to protect the communities they serve.

SINCE FEBRUARY 10, 1905



New Jersey State Fire Chief's Association

President

Frank Walters
311 Centre Avenue
Secaucus, NJ 07094
(201) 774-5660
E-mail:
FWalters@njchiefs.com

First Vice President

Robert Morris
2 Maryland Avenue
Whiting, NJ 08759
(732)232-1061
RMorris@njchiefs.com

Second Vice President

George Meredith
446 Broad Street
Beverly, NJ 08010
(609)694-9827
E-mail:
GMeredith@njchiefs.com

Secretary

Christopher H. Assenheimer
444 Central Avenue
Carlstadt, NJ 07072-1524
(201) 438-2603
E-mail:
CAssenheimer@njchiefs.com

Treasurer

Brian Valentino
103 Pension Road
Manalapan, NJ 07726-8401
(732)904-2953
Email:
BValentino@nchiefs.com

www.njchiefs.com

Sincerely,

Frank J. Walters
President
New Jersey Fire Chiefs Association

Cc via Email:

Representative Tom Kean, Jr.

Dan Scharfenberger, Chief of Staff
dan.scharfenberger@mail.house.gov

Oliver McIntosh, Telecom Legislative Assistant
oliver.mcintosh@mail.house.gov

Dan Butler, Legislative Director
dan.butler@mail.house.gov

Erin D'Auria, Director
erin.dauria@mail.house.gov

Representative Rob Menendez

Yujin Lee, Chief of Staff
yujin.lee@mail.house.gov

Georgia McLean, Telecom Legislative Assistant
georgia.mclean@mail.house.gov

Alexandria Musser, Legislative Director
alexandria.musser@mail.house.gov

SINCE FEBRUARY 10, 1905



New Jersey State Fire Chief's Association

President

Frank Walters
311 Centre Avenue
Secaucus, NJ 07094
(201) 774-5660
E-mail:
FWalters@njchiefs.com

First Vice President

Robert Morris
2 Maryland Avenue
Whiting, NJ 08759
(732)232-1061
RMorris@njchiefs.com

Second Vice President

George Meredith
446 Broad Street
Beverly, NJ 08010
(609)694-9827
E-mail:
GMeredith@njchiefs.com

Secretary

Christopher H. Assenheimer
444 Central Avenue
Carlstadt, NJ 07072-1524
(201) 438-2603
E-mail:
CAssenheimer@njchiefs.com

Treasurer

Brian Valentino
103 Pension Road
Manalapan, NJ 07726-8401
(732)904-2953
Email:
BValentino@nchiefs.com

www.njchiefs.com

Jeremy Julis, Director
jeremy.julis@mail.house.gov

Representative Frank Pallone

Liam Fitzsimmons, Chief of Staff
liam.fitzsimmons@mail.house.gov

James Johnson, Legislative Director and Telecom Legislative Assistant

james.johnson@mail.house.gov

Matthew Montekio, Director

matthew.montekio@mail.house.gov

Senator Andy Kim

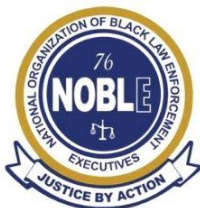
Amy Pfeiffer, Chief of Staff
amy_pfeiffer@kim.senate.gov

Lily Antonowicz, Legislative Assistant for Telecom

lily_antonowicz@kim.senate.gov

Kelly Boyer, Deputy Chief of Staff

kelly_boyer@kim.senate.gov



Recommendations for Preserving the Federal FirstNet Network

1. Length of Extension of Sunset of FirstNet Authority

1. Extend the sunset for 10 – 20 years.
2. Do not set the sunset date at the same time as the FirstNet contract renewal (15 years extension) – it creates too much uncertainty in changes in conditions of the contract during the federal contracting process.
 1. Preferably aim for the sunset to expire on September 30 (the end of a fiscal year) and not during an election year.
 2. Establish a recurring 10-year renewal of the First Responder Network Authority’s authorization, contingent upon the Secretary’s confirmation that it has fulfilled its statutory duties and subject to congressional oversight.

2. Redlines About Federal FirstNet Governance to Protect

1. Maintain the authority of the federal FirstNet Board.
 - i. It has representatives from public safety; the federal government; and industry.

1. Congress should consider adding the NTIA Administrator to the FirstNet Board (as a representative of the Department of Commerce).
 2. NTIA should ensure geographical diversity to the FirstNet Board.
 3. NTIA should return to setting up staggered terms for the FirstNet Board members.
 4. For the Cabinet-level officials on the FirstNet Board, they should be required to attend or send Executive Schedule official as a designate.
2. Maintain the role of the Public Safety Advisory Committee.
 1. It speaks for the public safety end users of the network and provides important guidance to the FirstNet Board members.
 2. The PSAC should not be designated as a FACA committee to ensure candid discussions between the PSAC members, the federal FirstNet staff, and the contractor of the NPSBN, which is AT&T.
 3. NTIA should work to improve the business processes for federal FirstNet.
 1. It is important that staffing and financial decisions (and financial transactions) should be administered in an efficient manner, so that the federal FirstNet network can be managed as efficiently as a commercial network (actually, more efficiently, because the federal FirstNet network is a life safety system for use during emergencies).
 2. The AT&T sustainability payments should be used for improvements to maintain and improve the federal FirstNet network.
 3. The contract should not be renegotiated mid-contract nor should non-contracted carriers be allowed access to the federal FirstNet core.
 1. The federal FirstNet network already can share voice and text data with other carriers.
 2. The federal FirstNet network's requirements for priority access and ruthless preemption remain key components of the network.
 4. Federal FirstNet should continue to be required to modernize the network and maintain its ability to adapt to new technology, including upgrading the 5G core and eventually evolving the network to 6G capability.

**TAXPAYERS
PROTECTION
ALLIANCE**

February 3, 2026

The Honorable Richard Hudson
Chair
House Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology
United States House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Doris Matsui
Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology
United States House of Representatives
2323 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Hudson, Ranking Member Matsui, and Members of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology,

The Taxpayers Protection Alliance (TPA) writes today to urge you to support the reauthorization of FirstNet. TPA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to educating the public through research and analysis about the government's impact on consumers, taxpayers, and the economy.

The network (known formally as the Nationwide Public Safety Broadband Network) was created in response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, during which emergency communications faltered and hindered the public safety response. FirstNet has received tremendous support from first responders, with 7.5 million users from more than 30,000 agencies, and covers more than 3 million square miles of the U.S. There is no federal mandate to subscribe to FirstNet, as a competition implied during the January 28 Senate hearing on the reauthorization of the network. Instead, public safety agencies only subscribe to FirstNet if they choose the network over alternative providers.

The network has played a critical role during large-scale emergency situations. For example, during the July 2025 flash floods in Texas, the FirstNet Response Operations Group responded to more than a dozen requests from public safety agencies to deploy portable cell sites to aid in response and recovery efforts, [AT&T reported](#).

Jeffrey Ackerman, chief of police in Duck, North Carolina, said FirstNet was key during the response to Hurricane Helene in 2024, [stating](#) that “with reliable connectivity on FirstNet, we were able to communicate with our team and other agencies while in remote areas. From search

**Taxpayers Protection Alliance, 1101 14th Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20005
(202) 930-1716
www.protectingtaxpayers.org**

**TAXPAYERS
PROTECTION
ALLIANCE**

and rescue to welfare checks and even connecting an isolated resident to her husband, FirstNet helped us better serve the local community.”

Public safety organizations have lined up in support of the reauthorization effort, asking that FirstNet continue as-is. In a [joint letter](#), the National Fraternal Order of Police and International Association of Fire Fighters rejected ideas by critics that FirstNet is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of public safety. “Our members who depend on FirstNet have confidence in their communication systems – and it is their lives that are at stake,” they wrote. “Our concern is that for-profit companies are seeking to enrich their shareholders by hindering or blocking our reauthorization efforts.”

While Congress initially allocated \$7 billion to fund the network, the money coming from spectrum auctions by the Federal Communications Commission, FirstNet has since become self-sufficient. AT&T agreed to invest \$40 billion over the 25-year contract to build, operate and maintain the network, making annual payments to the FirstNet Authority for usage of licensed spectrum in Band 14. A competitor implied during the Senate hearing that FirstNet is a government-owned network, but given AT&T’s own investment into the network that isn’t true.

Some lawmakers have proposed moving the FirstNet Authority under the auspices of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, but this would create unnecessary bureaucracy and erode the initial structure authorized by Congress of independent governance.

As the adage goes, if it isn’t broke don’t fix it. That is especially true for a rare government program that is self-sufficient and doesn't use taxpayer dollars. Congress should reauthorize FirstNet as it currently operates.

Sincerely,



David Williams
President



February 03, 2026

Electronic Mail

The Honorable Brett Guthrie, Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Richard Hudson, Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
House Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Guthrie and Chairman Hudson:

On behalf of the Public Safety Broadband Technology Association (PSBTA), we appreciate the Committee's leadership in convening a legislative hearing on the reauthorization of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). The decisions before Congress will have long term impacts for the safety of first responders and the communities they serve.

That is why reauthorization language now circulating on Capitol Hill is so deeply disappointing. After years of success and operational reliability, this language does not build on achievement. It threatens to unravel the framework that made FirstNet effective.

The bill language before Congress seeks to eliminate the FirstNet Authority independent status and place it inside the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA), shifting control of a life-saving network to someone who has never been on the frontlines. It adds political layers between first responders and the network they rely on, weakening public safety influence and slowing decisions. For a network designed to serve critical missions, this bureaucratic approach is unnecessary; moreover, it is seriously misguided.

To ensure the legislative record fully reflects the operational truths and governance needs of FirstNet, PSBTA respectfully urges the Committee to ask the following questions of the Acting Chair, Sheriff Mike Adkinson of the FirstNet Authority Board, on the record and under oath, during the hearing on Wednesday:

- With respect to hiring, evaluating, assessing, directing, or terminating the FirstNet Executive Director/CEO or FirstNet Authority staff, what role do you, as Board Chair, or the Board collectively, have?

PSBTA Letter to Chairman Guthrie and Chairman Hudson – December 15, 2025 – Page 2.

- As highlighted in a recent Office of Inspector General (OIG) report, there were allegations of whistleblower retaliation and interference with OIG activities:
 - What role did you or the Board have in hiring, managing, directing, or assessing the prior Executive Director?
 - When did you first become aware of these allegations?

- What role did the Board play in the hiring of the current Executive Director?

- Does the FirstNet Authority currently have sufficient personnel resources to implement the corrective actions or improvements identified in recent OIG reports?

- The FirstNet Authority’s FY 2026 budget includes substantial funds that were on hand during FY 2025 but were not invested and instead carried over. Is this carryover typical, or was there a specific reason these funds were not invested in the network during FY 2025?
 - Do you anticipate similar carryovers occurring again in FY 2026?

Taken together, the responses to these questions should demonstrate overwhelmingly to the Committee and all of Congress that maintaining oversight and decision making authority within the independent FirstNet Authority Board, rather than NTIA, is essential to protecting the public safety mission, preserving operational integrity, and safeguarding the lives of first responders and the residents of hometown communities they serve every day.

FirstNet funding must remain dedicated exclusively to building, operating, and improving the nationwide public safety broadband network for which it was authorized.

We respectfully urge the Committee to ensure that reauthorization legislation preserves the Authority’s independence. If any changes were to be made, it would be to strengthen the decision-making authority of the FirstNet Authority Board with respect to management and oversight according to its original design. This governance has created what is widely regarded by public safety organizations as one of the most successful public private partnerships in the history of the United States, and it is improving every day.

Respectfully submitted,



John Paul Jones, Fire Chief-Emeritus
Executive Director, Public Safety Broadband Technology Association

cc: Members, House Committee on Energy and Commerce



210 N. Monroe St.
Versailles, IN 47042
sheriff@ripleycounty.com

Rob Bradley
Sheriff

Office (812) 689-5558
Dispatch (812) 689-5555
FAX (812) 689-5418

SUBJECT: Support for Reauthorization of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)

We understand the House E&C Communications Subcommittee has an upcoming hearing on FirstNet. We rely on the FirstNet network and support FirstNet Authority Reauthorization. We encourage Representative Erin Houchin to support the FirstNet program's continued success.

As a largely rural county, Ripley County faces unique public safety communications challenges, including limited commercial coverage, geographic isolation, and the need to coordinate multi-agency responses across jurisdictional boundaries. FirstNet has proven to be a vital and reliable communications platform that directly enhances officer safety, operational effectiveness, and our ability to protect the public—particularly during emergencies, large-scale incidents, and natural disasters when commercial networks are often congested or unreliable.

FirstNet's priority and preemption capabilities ensure that law enforcement, fire, EMS, and emergency management personnel can maintain uninterrupted communications during critical incidents. This interoperability is essential for coordinated multi-agency response efforts, especially in rural environments where resources are limited and response times can be impacted by distance and terrain.

In 2023, the Ripley County Sheriff's Office relied on FirstNet technology during a search and rescue operation to transmit critical data to analysts located off site. Using FirstNet communications equipment, we were able to securely and reliably send digital imagery for analysis. Without the FirstNet communications equipment and network reliability, we would have been unable to utilize this critical resource, significantly impacting the effectiveness of the mission.

This real-world application underscores the importance of a dedicated, public-safety-focused broadband network. FirstNet is not simply a convenience—it is an operational necessity that enables advanced technologies, improves situational awareness, and strengthens outcomes during life-safety incidents.

Reauthorizing the FirstNet Authority will ensure continued investment, innovation, and long-term stability in a communications system purpose-built for first responders. We respectfully urge your support for this reauthorization and appreciate your continued commitment to strengthening public safety communications for communities across Indiana and the nation.


LEE H. DAVIDSON, Chief Deputy
Ripley County Sheriff's Office

2/2/26