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6 SOLUTIONS TO STRENGTHEN U.S. PUBLIC SAFETY

7 COMMUNICATIONS

8 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2018

9 House of Representatives

10 Subcommittee on Communications and

11 Technology

12 Committee on Energy and Commerce

13 Washington, D.C.

14

15

16

17 The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:30 a.m., in  
18 Room 2322 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Leonard Lance [vice  
19 chairman of the subcommittee] presiding.

20 Members present: Representatives Lance, Shimkus, Guthrie,  
21 Olson, Bilirakis, Johnson, Long, Flores, Brooks, Walters,  
22 Costello, Walden (ex officio), Doyle, Welch, Clarke, Ruiz, Engel,

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23 McNeerney, and Pallone (ex officio).

24 Staff present: Jon Adame, Policy Coordinator,  
25 Communications and Technology; Mike Bloomquist, Deputy Staff  
26 Director; Samantha Bopp, Staff Assistant; Robin Colwell, Chief  
27 Counsel, Communications and Technology; Kristine Fargotstein,  
28 Detailee, Communications and Technology; Sean Farrell,  
29 Professional Staff Member, Communications and Technology; Elena  
30 Hernandez, Press Secretary; Tim Kurth, Deputy Chief Counsel,  
31 Communications and Technology; Lauren McCarty, Counsel,  
32 Communications and Technology; Austin Stonebraker, Press  
33 Assistant; Evan Viau, Legislative Clerk, Communications and  
34 Technology; Hamlin Wade, Special Advisor, External Affairs; Jeff  
35 Carroll, Minority Staff Director; Jennifer Epperson, Minority  
36 FCC Detailee; Alex Hoehn-Saric, Minority Chief Counsel,  
37 Communications and Technology; Jerry Leverich, Minority Counsel;  
38 Jourdan Lewis, Minority Staff Assistant; Dan Miller, Minority  
39 Policy Analyst; and C.J. Young, Minority Press Secretary.

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40 Mr. Lance. [Presiding.] Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.  
41 The subcommittee will come to order. I am Leonard Lance, the  
42 vice chair of the subcommittee and I have the honor of chairing  
43 the subcommittee today. The Subcommittee on Communications and  
44 Technology will now come to order. I thank our witnesses for  
45 being here. I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for an opening  
46 statement.

47 Since the inception of 9-1-1 as the nationwide emergency  
48 telephone number in 1968, 9-1-1 call centers around the country  
49 have saved countless lives by giving the public a quick and easy  
50 way to request assistance in times of emergency. Technological  
51 advances over the years such as geolocation have opened up  
52 opportunities to improve upon the system, allowing law enforcement  
53 officers to receive the approximate location of where a call has  
54 originated.

55 In order to keep up with the times, many states have  
56 established a fee or tax to upgrade and maintain their 9-1-1  
57 systems. These funds are especially crucial as we look to Next  
58 Gen 9-1-1 to update significantly the capabilities of our  
59 emergency communications. Innovations such as text-to-9-1-1 and  
60 the ability for citizens to send law enforcement officials  
61 real-time video during an emergency have the potential to

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62 revolutionize our emergency communications and save even more  
63 lives.

64 Under the New and Emerging Technologies 911 Improvement Act  
65 of 2008, the Federal Communications Commission is required to  
66 submit a report to Congress on state collection and distribution  
67 of 9-1-1 and enhanced 9-1-1 fees and charges. These reports have  
68 shed light on a handful of states that have been raiding these  
69 9-1-1 fees and diverting the funds for unrelated purposes.

70 This unacceptable practice leaves counties and localities  
71 on the hook for maintaining and upgrading their systems, and this  
72 of course endangers public safety. Since 2004, New Jersey, where  
73 I live, has collected a 90 cent tax on consumers' monthly telephone  
74 and cell phone bills for 9-1-1 improvements. However, New Jersey  
75 has become the worst 9-1-1 fee diverter in the country, diverting  
76 over one billion dollars to non-9-1-1 related purposes.

77 Quite simply, this is unacceptable. Our constituents need  
78 to know that in an emergency their 9-1-1 call is going to go  
79 through. Lawmakers in state capitals including Trenton and in  
80 several other state capitals around the country have raided the  
81 funds set aside to improve the 9-1-1 system and left the account  
82 penniless, leaving public safety threatened and local taxpayers  
83 on the hook as I have said.

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84 I opposed the original legislation in New Jersey because  
85 it opened the door to the diversion as we are seeing today and  
86 this has been regardless of which party has controlled the  
87 governorship in the state I represent. Now, New Jersey lawmakers  
88 are considering an increase on the tax to fund Next Gen 9-1-1.

89 Instead of further taxing New Jerseyans, Trenton should first  
90 stop diverting any existing fees from their intended use.

91 I am pleased to welcome Jim Curry to our panel today. Mr.  
92 Curry is the Division of Communications Director for Hunterdon  
93 County's Department of Public Safety and Health Services.  
94 Hunterdon County is one of 21 counties in New Jersey and I  
95 personally live in Hunterdon County.

96 Last month, Mr. Curry and the rest of the staff at the 9-1-1  
97 Communications Center were kind enough to give me a tour of the  
98 facility and we were joined by Commissioner Mike O'Rielly of the  
99 Federal Communications Commission. Commissioner O'Rielly has been  
100 a leader in the effort to stop the states from diverting and  
101 certainly I think we give him great credit in that regard. The  
102 work that is being done is truly remarkable and I was extremely  
103 impressed with the operation as it was ongoing.

104 Despite receiving little to no funds from the state 9-1-1  
105 fee fund, Hunterdon County has managed to maintain a

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106 state-of-the-art system. However, because the state has been  
107 diverting the fees in such a dramatic amount, counties in New  
108 Jersey are left to their own devices. These funds generally come  
109 from residents in property taxes which are already among the  
110 highest in the nation.

111 That is why I have joined Congressman Collins and  
112 Congresswoman Eshoo in introducing the 9-1-1 Fee Integrity Act  
113 which would direct the FCC to establish legitimate uses for 9-1-1  
114 fees to be directed. And obviously this is bipartisan in nature,  
115 Congresswoman Eshoo is a very distinguished senior member of the  
116 committee on the democratic side.

117 I commend Commissioner O'Rielly and Commissioner Rosenworcel  
118 for working hard at the FCC, again in a bipartisan capacity, to  
119 bring to light the actions of these few bad actor states. However,  
120 the Commission's ability to combat diversion is limited. This  
121 bipartisan, common sense legislation will enable the FCC to ensure  
122 that bad actors such as New Jersey are no longer able to divert  
123 funds.

124 I commend the members of the subcommittee for their fine  
125 work in drafting these important pieces of legislation and I thank  
126 our distinguished panel for appearing before us today. I look  
127 forward to the testimony and I now recognize the ranking member,

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128 Mr. Doyle.

129 I now recognize the ranking member, Mr. Doyle.

130 Mr. Doyle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding  
131 this hearing today and thank you to the witnesses for your  
132 testimony today.

133 Public safety communications and the integrity of our 9-1-1  
134 system is of paramount importance to our nation. Ensuring that  
135 lifesaving aid gets to those in need, in time, often comes down  
136 to a fast, well-coordinated response by local first responders,  
137 something our witnesses deal with every day. This process often  
138 starts when a person in need picks up their phone to call for  
139 help.

140 This subcommittee is examining three pieces of legislation  
141 today. Mr. Lance and Ms. Eshoo have introduced legislation  
142 regarding 9-1-1 fee diversion. This is a practice where a small  
143 number of states divert fees intended to fund and upgrade 9-1-1  
144 call centers to other non-related public safety programs. This  
145 bill seeks to further direct and clarify the FCC's efforts to  
146 investigate and report on this practice.

147 The second piece of legislation was introduced by Mr. Engel  
148 and Mr. Kinzinger regarding swatting, a malicious and deadly  
149 practice where individuals use weaknesses in the phone network

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150 to conceal their identity and report a false event that warrants  
151 a large-scale police response. Such incidents require full-scale  
152 responses that take time and money away from departments tasked  
153 with protecting the public.

154 Like many here, I have read too many stories of how these  
155 incidents can go bad as well with SWAT teams being prepared to  
156 deal with extremely dangerous situations only to come across  
157 confused and frightened individuals who have been targeted by  
158 these swatting attacks. Too many times, innocent people have  
159 lost their lives because of these malicious, deceptive calls.  
160 Our colleague Congresswoman Clarke has, herself, been a victim  
161 of swatting.

162 I am happy to once again support my colleague Mr. Engel's  
163 bill to rein in this dangerous practice. This bill was voice  
164 voted out of committee in the last Congress and I hope that we  
165 can do so again. I hope as the committee examines this issue  
166 that we continue our due diligence. Increasing the penalties  
167 for this offense is important, but we need to strengthen our  
168 telecommunications systems to ensure that the people calling 9-1-1  
169 and, to be honest, calling of us are who they say they are.

170 Every day I get calls from fake numbers claiming to come  
171 from my neighborhood. We cannot ultimately curb swatting until

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172 our phone systems can do a better job of identifying and blocking  
173 fake numbers. I would urge the majority and the chairman to keep  
174 this in mind if they hope to address this underlying issue.

175 Finally, we are looking at a bill introduced by Mrs. Brooks  
176 and Ms. Eshoo regarding the establishment of a national  
177 non-emergency short dialing code. In Pittsburgh, like many  
178 cities, 3-1-1 is that number. Residents in Pittsburgh can use  
179 it to report a downed tree, a building code violation, or in my  
180 city all too often a pothole on a city street.

181 This service gives residents a valuable line to the city  
182 and municipal agencies where they can report important but  
183 non-emergency incidents. Properly implemented, this service can  
184 reduce the burden on 9-1-1 operators and call centers allowing  
185 them to focus more fully on responding to real emergency  
186 situations. I hope we can advance this legislation as well.

187 And while I think these bills should be able to move in our  
188 committee, I am very concerned that this hearing is titled  
189 Solutions to Strengthen U.S. Public Safety Communications. None  
190 of these bills nor the committee's other efforts have gone far  
191 enough to address many of the underlying challenges facing this  
192 sector, in my opinion. As the witnesses pointed out, public  
193 safety agencies need a strong federal partner to ensure that they

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194 have the technology and solutions deployed to meet the needs of  
195 our country.

196 I would like to submit for the record an article from the  
197 New York Times Magazine that was published last month regarding  
198 one family's horrific experience in Houston during Hurricane  
199 Harvey. The family couldn't get a medevac via 9-1-1 so they  
200 resorted to calling their congressman, Gene Green, a member of  
201 this committee, where an intern answered the phone and helped  
202 to direct a helicopter rescue.

203 The 9-1-1 system was clearly overwhelmed and was not nearly  
204 robust or resilient enough to tackle the volume of calls or the  
205 multiple storm related equipment and facility failures that  
206 occurred. And none of this is in any way intended to diminish  
207 the brave and courageous efforts of so many volunteers who came  
208 to their neighbors' aid in this disaster and so many others.  
209 But for the richest, most powerful nation on earth we can and  
210 should do better, Mr. Chairman. With that I yield back.

211 Mr. Lance. Thank you very much, Mr. Doyle. The chair now  
212 recognizes the chairman of the full committee, Mr. Walden of  
213 Oregon, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

214 The Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want  
215 to welcome our witnesses. Thanks both for your help this morning

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216 in giving us your guidance and counsel and the service you provide  
217 in your states and communities.

218 We have a legislative hearing where we will be discussing  
219 three important bipartisan public safety bills. 2 weeks ago we  
220 remembered the sacrifices and the heroism of the September 11th  
221 attacks. Ceremonies across our nation reminded us not just of  
222 those Americans we lost, but also of the hard work our public  
223 safety community does day in and day out to keep us safe. This  
224 is evident again as our first responders managed the consequences  
225 of various hurricanes including, especially, Hurricane Florence.

226 Whether at home or at school, our children learn at an early  
227 age that when an emergency strikes you dial 9-1-1. But like the  
228 technology systems, our 9-1-1 systems must be preserved and  
229 improved to deliver potentially lifesaving services reliably and  
230 seamlessly when called upon. This committee worked in a  
231 bipartisan manner in Congress to enact improved rural call  
232 completion so the call actually will go through. Also, we passed  
233 Kari's Law. That ensures that when we dial 9-1-1, no matter where  
234 we are including a hotel room, the call will go through without  
235 the need to dial another number.

236 With rules finally approved for NTIA and NHTSA to move forward  
237 on distributing funds for Next Gen 9-1-1, I am pleased these

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238 dollars will be finding their way to localities. Whether it is  
239 these dollars or the much larger share of fees collected on your  
240 phone bill, we have a duty to ensure that the 6,000 public safety  
241 answering points or PSAPs nationwide that manage our 9-1-1 systems  
242 are actually receiving these vital funds.

243           Unfortunately, we have found that some states have diverted  
244 their 9-1-1 funds that were assessed for this specific purpose.

245           We have seen states divert funding directly into their general  
246 funds while others use the money for another public safety related  
247 purpose that may have nothing to do with the 9-1-1 system. The  
248 result is the same, PSAPs aren't getting the money they are  
249 promised.

250           And I would just say as an aside, I would guess that it would  
251 be a fraud for most people other than the government that if you  
252 collected a fee for an intended purpose and you put it in writing  
253 and sent it through the mail and then you diverted the funds for  
254 some other purpose, my guess is if you weren't the government  
255 you would be facing a prosecutor.

256           So today we will discuss H.R. 6424, the 9-1-1 Fee Integrity  
257 Act, which would clarify for states and municipalities that funds  
258 raised for 9-1-1, paid for by users of 9-1-1 and phones, are only  
259 spent on 9-1-1.

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260 We will also discuss H.R. 5700, Mrs. Brooks' National  
261 Non-emergency Mobile Number Act. While the FCC designated 9-1-1  
262 as the nation's emergency number more than 50 years ago, the 9-1-1  
263 system is sometimes used unnecessarily in non-emergencies. So  
264 in order to preserve 9-1-1 services for true emergencies and to  
265 ensure limited public safety resources are not used unnecessarily,  
266 some states have adopted an easy-to-remember, short code that  
267 the public can dial to reach public safety officials in  
268 non-emergency situations.

269 However, there is no unified short code, so a traveler  
270 traveling from Colorado to Oregon might be able to dial star-2-7-7  
271 in Colorado, pound-4-3-5-7 in Wyoming, star-4-7-7 throughout  
272 Idaho, and finally there is no short code in Oregon. So that  
273 is a lot to keep track of. Mrs. Brooks' bill would make things  
274 a whole bunch easier. We appreciate her diligent work on this  
275 issue directing the FCC to set up a unified short code that states  
276 could choose and then adopt. Finally, we will be  
277 discussing H.R. 6300 that is Mr. Engel's Anti-swatting Act. This  
278 should be a familiar bill given that we approved by voice vote  
279 this bill last Congress. Swatting is the act of using misleading  
280 or inaccurate caller ID information with an intent to trigger  
281 a law enforcement response where no real emergency exists.

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282 Swatting is dangerous, it is a drain on precious resources, and  
283 it is illegal. Unfortunately, swatting incidents remain a  
284 problem and continue to put law enforcement or innocent bystanders  
285 in harm's way. Mr. Engel's bill would stiffen criminal penalties  
286 against those who are convicted of swatting and bolster our public  
287 safety officials' ability to serve and to protect.

288 So, collectively, the bipartisan bills to be discussed today  
289 will help improve, they will help strengthen the 9-1-1 system,  
290 and enhance public safety across the country.

291 So I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. And  
292 I would also say that it was this committee several years ago  
293 that passed the legislation that set up the spectrum auction that  
294 has funded and helped get in place FirstNet and we intend to  
295 continue to do our due diligence to oversee the implementation  
296 of FirstNet to make sure that it actually delivers on the promise  
297 that our first responders will have an interoperable public safety  
298 network that works for them.

299 And so we have done a lot out of the committee mostly in  
300 a bipartisan way. We appreciate your being here today. We have  
301 three more important bills to look at. And with that, Mr.  
302 Chairman, I yield back the balance of my time. Mr. Lance.  
303 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The chair now recognizes the ranking

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304 member of the full committee, Mr. Pallone of New Jersey, for 5  
305 minutes.

306 Mr. Pallone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

307 Today we are here to talk about ways to support public safety  
308 and our nation's first responders. America asks so much of our  
309 emergency workers and the least we can do is make sure they have  
310 the best and most up-to-date tools to do their jobs. I would  
311 like to thank our panel for the work they do every day helping  
312 Americans in times of crisis and distress. It seems almost  
313 every week we are reminded of the critical role first responders  
314 play in keeping people safe. Last week we watched as first  
315 responders along the Carolina coast rescued people trapped in  
316 their homes as rising waters made it nearly impossible to escape.

317 Emergency communications is critical in such times. If 9-1-1  
318 calls are not completed emergency responders will not arrive.

319 And that is why it so important that Congress enacted my  
320 SANDy Act earlier this year to help ensure our critical  
321 communications networks have access to the resources they need  
322 to stay on line during a disaster. Beyond calls from the public  
323 to 9-1-1 dispatchers, if police or firefighters can't communicate  
324 with each other during a crisis their lives and the lives of the  
325 public are put at risk.

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326 This committee on a bipartisan basis passed legislation to  
327 create a nationwide broadband communications network dedicated  
328 to public safety. What resulted is FirstNet. While early in  
329 its rollout the network promises to make first responders across  
330 the country safer and help them with their work, FirstNet is an  
331 important step but more must be done to help public safety.

332 Today's hearing considers some important issues. I have  
333 long criticized states including my own in New Jersey of diverting  
334 9-1-1 fees. As Mr. Curry will explain, it is expensive to operate  
335 a 9-1-1 center and it is important that they are fully funded.

336 States should also be upgrading centers to be Next Generation  
337 9-1-1 capable. Next Generation 9-1-1 will enable the public to  
338 transmit images, video, and texts to 9-1-1 centers where operators  
339 will be able to process and pass this information to first  
340 responders. And this is extremely valuable information, but the  
341 costs will be significant.

342 Last year, every Democrat on the committee co-sponsored the  
343 LIFT America Act which makes key investments in our nation's  
344 infrastructure including helping to fund the deployment of Next  
345 Generation 911. In addition, Representatives Eshoo, Torres, and  
346 I introduced the Next Generation 9-1-1 Act of 2017 which expands  
347 the federal NG9-1-1 grant program. These are common sense

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348 proposals that we should be able to work on together.

349 In the coming year, I urge my colleagues to work with me  
350 on legislation to upgrade our nation's infrastructure including  
351 our public safety systems. I would also like to recognize the  
352 important efforts of Mr. Engel to fight swatting, fake emergency  
353 calls to dispatch police to an address where no emergency is  
354 occurring. This is really dangerous. It puts innocent lives  
355 at risk and burdens already stretched police resources. So  
356 Congress must provide law enforcement the tools to stop such  
357 malicious acts.

358 And I would like now to yield the remaining 2 minutes to,  
359 oh, I guess he is not here yet, Mr. Engel. I think he is at his  
360 Foreign Affairs Committee. So I would at this point yield the  
361 balance of my time. Mr. Lance. Thank you very much, Ranking  
362 Member. Are there any other members of the committee who would  
363 like to have an opening statement?

364 Seeing none, this concludes member opening statements. The  
365 chair reminds members that pursuant to the committee rules, all  
366 members' opening statements will be made part of the record.

367 We want to thank our witnesses for being here today and we  
368 appreciate your taking the time to testify before the  
369 subcommittee. Today's witnesses will have the opportunity to

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370 give opening statements followed by a round of questions from  
371 members.

372 Our panel for today's hearings will include Mr. Eddie Reyes,  
373 Director of Public Safety Communications for Prince William  
374 County; Mr. Jim Curry, the Division Head of the Communications  
375 Division of the Hunterdon County Department of Public Safety;  
376 and Captain Paul Starks, the director of the Public Information  
377 Office at the Montgomery County Police Department. We appreciate  
378 the fact, gentlemen, that you are here today before the committee.

379 We know you have important responsibilities in your jurisdictions  
380 and we are honored that you are in Washington.

381 We will begin with Mr. Reyes. You are recognized, sir, for  
382 5 minutes for the purposes of an opening statement. Good morning  
383 to you.

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19

384 STATEMENTS OF EDDIE REYES, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC SAFETY  
385 COMMUNICATIONS, PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY GOVERNMENT; JAMES CURRY,  
386 COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION HEAD, HUNTERDON COUNTY, NEW JERSEY  
387 DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY; AND, PAUL STARKS, DIRECTOR, PUBLIC  
388 INFORMATION OFFICE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND POLICE DEPARTMENT

389

390 STATEMENT OF EDDIE REYES

391 Mr. Reyes. Thank you, Mr. Lance. Chairman Blackburn,  
392 Ranking Member Doyle, Mr. Lance, thank you for giving me this  
393 opportunity to testify before you today. It is an honor and a  
394 privilege to be selected to represent the 9-1-1 community at this  
395 hearing and be a part of this bipartisan process.

396 I am the director of Office of Public Safety Communications  
397 in Prince William County, Virginia, one of the nation's  
398 approximately 5,800 public safety answering points which has been  
399 recognized as PSAPs. They are also known as emergency  
400 communication centers or 9-1-1 centers. ECCs, like the one I  
401 lead, answer more than 240 million calls every year in the United  
402 States. That is roughly about 657,000 calls per day.

403 Prior to becoming the ECC director in Prince William County  
404 I was a police officer in Alexandria, Virginia for 25 years.  
405 I retired as a senior deputy chief and second in command at the

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406 police department. I worked in almost every unit of the police  
407 department and I was ECC director in 2001 during the September  
408 11th attack at the Pentagon and during the 3 weeks in 2002 when  
409 the Beltway Sniper gripped the entire National Capital Region  
410 with fear. I am also the chairman of the International  
411 Association of Chiefs of Police Communications & Technology  
412 Committee.

413 A few statistics about Prince William County's emergency  
414 communications center: In addition to serving almost half a  
415 million residents in the county, we provide a wireless 9-1-1  
416 service and dispatch for police, fire and rescue personnel to  
417 five small municipalities within our county. We are also part  
418 of the National Capital Region which has a population of over  
419 six million residents.

420 Public safety organizations in the NCR coordinate  
421 extensively to make sure area residents receive high quality  
422 emergency response across the region. Mutual aid is an hourly  
423 thing for us. My center has just over a hundred employees that  
424 receive and process approximately 409,000 calls per year in which  
425 154- of those were emergencies 254,000 were non-emergencies.  
426 Of the 409,000 calls for service that we received, about 251,000  
427 were for police and 44,000 were for fire and rescue. The largest

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428 difference between the number of calls received and those  
429 dispatched are that they all come from a smart phone.

430 I will transition over to the bill that I am most passionate  
431 about and that is H.R. 6003. I have spoken to 9-1-1 center  
432 directors or staff, law enforcement officers, and major  
433 associations such as APCO and NENA and all of them support this  
434 bill. Even before the FBI coined the term "9-1-1 swatting,"  
435 across the country we have been fighting this complex,  
436 ever-evolving threat to public safety. It would just be  
437 repetitive for me to mention a lot of the things that have already  
438 been said about swatting other than ditto and we agree. So this  
439 is very, very important to us.

440 Next, I will transition over to House Bill 6424 and that,  
441 well, almost everyone in the 9-1-1 industry is in favor of this  
442 bill provided it eliminates a big loophole -- lack of audit,  
443 accountability, and enforcement mechanism to the offending  
444 states. As it has already been reported, there are offending  
445 states like New Jersey, West Virginia, and others that are known  
446 to public safety and 9-1-1 centers for diverting funds. And I  
447 can tell you that as a proud resident of the Commonwealth of  
448 Virginia, we know how important it is not to divert funds, so  
449 I very much support that bill as well. Regarding 5700,

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450 H.R. 5700, this bill caused the greatest quantity in discussion  
451 and disagreement among all that I spoke with. While some were  
452 supportive, the addition of public safety, non-emergency short  
453 code for mobile users can bring unintended consequences to  
454 emergency communication centers, significantly increasing call  
455 volume without considering additional staffing. So statistics  
456 demonstrate that 9-1-1 has been a problem caused by too many  
457 non-emergency calls.

458 So in closing I would like to take a brief moment to thank  
459 you, to thank Representative Shimkus and Eshoo for joining with  
460 their co-chairs of the Next Gen 9-1-1 caucus to send a bipartisan  
461 letter to the Office of Management and Budget to revise the  
462 standard occupational classification to accurately represent the  
463 lifesaving nature of the work performed by 9-1-1 professionals.

464 9-1-1 professionals work behind the scenes to protect the lives  
465 of first responders.

466 I am very grateful for the attention this committee has given  
467 to these very important bills to public safety in general, but  
468 most importantly to emergency telecommunicators. Thank you very  
469 much.

470 [The prepared statement of Mr. Reyes follows:]

471

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472

\*\*\*\*\*INSERT 1\*\*\*\*\*

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473           Mr. Lance. Thank you very much for your distinguished  
474 testimony.

475           Mr. Curry, you are recognized for 5 minutes.



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25

476 STATEMENT OF JAMES CURRY

477

478 Mr. Curry. Good morning.

479 Mr. Lance. Good morning.

480 Mr. Curry. Vice Chairman Lance, members of the committee  
481 thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

482 It is an honor and privilege to take part in this hearing and  
483 be a part of this great nation's legislative process.

484 I am the division head for the Hunterdon County  
485 communications center in New Jersey, the first county 9-1-1 system  
486 to operate in that state. Prior to my current position, I was  
487 a police officer for 27 years and retired at the rank of captain.

488 I have spent my entire professional career in public emergency  
489 service without regret.

490 Like many counties in New Jersey, Hunterdon County is a mix  
491 of suburban and rural communities with many bucolic hamlets and  
492 villages. It is dotted with preserved farmland, numerous acres  
493 of park land, and two recreational reservoirs. Interstate 78,  
494 a major highway and artery for Newark and Elizabeth, divides the  
495 county in half north and south.

496 The communications center is the sole provider of emergency  
497 communications for each municipal police department, fire

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498 department, and EMS agency in the county. All totaled we dispatch  
499 for about 60 organizations. Daily we average a little over 100  
500 9-1-1 calls or about 38,000 a year. This is carried out by 25  
501 dedicated, full-time public safety telecommunicators, commonly  
502 referred to as dispatchers.

503         These men and women are never seen, always heard, and seldom  
504 recognized. They work nights, weekends, and holidays, and like  
505 our first responders they can't stay home because the weather  
506 is bad. Day in and day out they speak to folks who are having  
507 the worst day of their lives. For some of those callers, the  
508 dispatcher is the last human voice they will hear. If you ask  
509 the dispatchers why they keep doing the job, most will answer  
510 because they enjoy it. They enjoy making a difference.

511         I live and work in the state of New Jersey. It is a fantastic  
512 state. Beaches, mountains, entertainment venues, New York City,  
513 and Philadelphia all within a short drive from most anywhere in  
514 the state. Its marine ports, colleges and universities, all  
515 within a short drive from anywhere in the state, and businesses,  
516 also make it a great place to live and work. New Jersey is a  
517 major hub of global economy.             Unfortunately, but  
518 deservedly, it is also known as a heavily-taxed state. We in  
519 New Jersey have come to enjoy top-shelf services, especially the

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520 emergency service we receive. After all, you get what you pay  
521 for. Well, maybe not always. I was requested to appear today  
522 before this committee to discuss H.R. 6424, the 9-1-1 Fee Integrity  
523 Act, because in my state when you pay certain fees on your phone  
524 bills, called 9-1-1 fees, it doesn't finance what one might expect.

525         According to the New Jersey Association of Counties and the  
526 New Jersey Wireless Association, the state collects approximately  
527 \$120 million annually in consumer surcharges as 9-1-1 system and  
528 emergency response fees and deposits into a trust fund. However,  
529 according to the FCC, since 2006, only 11 percent of the 1.3 billion  
530 collected has been spent on eligible expenses. None of the money  
531 has been used to fund those eligible expenses at the 9-1-1 level,  
532 local 9-1-1 level.         To provide an example, last year we  
533 completed an upgrade to our 9-1-1 phone system. It wasn't  
534 voluntary. The old system was no longer supported. At a cost  
535 of \$600,000 the project was paid for using capital improvement  
536 funds, in other words taxpayer money. Those taxpayers may have  
537 thought they subsidized it when they paid their phone bills, but  
538 actually they paid for it twice.

539         Operating a 9-1-1 center is expensive. In 2016, our overall  
540 budget exceeded two and a quarter million dollars. This year  
541 our operating budget alone was \$310,000. The cost to maintain

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542 our 9-1-1 system will devour well over one-third of that. The  
543 remainder will be spent on radio equipment and tower and generator  
544 maintenance, site security, and a host of other essential  
545 expenses.

546 We look forward to the day when Next Generation 9-1-1 is  
547 realized in New Jersey. It will enable the public to transmit  
548 text images, video, and data to our center. Our frequent saying  
549 by one of our technicians, Matt Tamburro, is this isn't like what  
550 you see on television, and it isn't. The reality is dispatchers  
551 try to find a caller's location by manual entries and  
552 interrogation.

553 We don't know what the associated costs will be for us for  
554 Next Generation 9-1-1 and I dodge the constant barrage of vendors,  
555 daily, willing to sell us their products that will get us through  
556 until the arrival of Next Generation 9-1-1. Those wares come  
557 with a hefty price tag. Even in just a small 9-1-1 center like  
558 ours, the cost can exceed \$35,000 annually. I could  
559 ramble on about the 9-1-1 funding needs of the Hunterdon County  
560 communications center, but I would prefer to conclude with the  
561 importance of 9-1-1. When a caller requests the police they  
562 understand that officer may be on another call. When that caller  
563 dialed 9-1-1 they expect it to be answered immediately and by

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564 a well-trained professional. The police may work shorthanded  
565 for a shift, but the 9-1-1 seat must be occupied.

566 This month we remember the tragic events of 9/11 and just  
567 a few miles to our south the effects of a major hurricane continues  
568 to wreak havoc on tens of thousands of people's lives. When  
569 citizens are faced with a situation beyond their own capabilities  
570 they will dial 9-1-1. Those three digits are the same for everyone  
571 and it does not discriminate. Perhaps we can do without  
572 electricity for a short while, but we must have a robust 9-1-1  
573 lifeline infrastructure. Likewise, the dispatchers need the  
574 tools to accomplish their mission of helping others and saving  
575 lives.

576 I want to end my statement by publicly thanking the Hunterdon  
577 County dispatchers, technicians, and administrative staff. You  
578 do make a difference every day. Moreover, I wish to thank this  
579 committee for your time and devotion to public service not only  
580 concerning this issue but for all matters that have and will be  
581 decided on in the future. Thank you.

582 [The prepared statement of Mr. Curry follows:]

583

584 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 2\*\*\*\*\*

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585

Mr. Lance. Thank you very much, Mr. Curry.

586

The chair now recognizes Captain Starks for 5 minutes,

587

Captain Starks. Welcome to the subcommittee.

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588 STATEMENT OF PAUL STARKS

589

590 Mr. Starks. Thank you and good morning to distinguished  
591 members of this committee. My name is Paul Starks. I am director  
592 of the Public Information Office with the Montgomery County Police  
593 Department where I have been a cop for 34 years. Our jurisdiction  
594 is in Maryland just across the line and adjacent to the District  
595 of Columbia.

596 We live in a time where so many forms of technology have  
597 been developed and can be accessed by most people and we live  
598 in a country with a free and open society where a variety of  
599 communication paths are available to virtually everyone. Some  
600 of these methods to call in a phone call or post or send messages  
601 are assigned to and can be traced back to an individual, but some  
602 of the steps that are used in some of these methods are not as  
603 easily walked back and therefore it is not as easy to determine  
604 the history of access or use. Some of that lends itself to  
605 false reporting of in-progress, violent crimes that can  
606 potentially cause a major response by law enforcement, fire and  
607 rescue, and other emergency services providers. That type of  
608 false call has been termed "swatting." When an individual creates  
609 a swatting incident detailing false information that involves

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610 an act of violence, sometimes involving a large population group  
611 like that of a school, it causes large numbers of personnel to  
612 put forth efforts that are not only costly but also strip an  
613 organization and a community of public safety resources.

614           When a message is first received, call takers, dispatchers,  
615 and their supervisors become involved in gathering details  
616 regarding that call. This event also may take a 9-1-1 line out  
617 of service while these details are confirmed. Next to be involved  
618 are the cops and fire and rescue employees who are taken from  
619 their primary responsibilities and direct their attention to the  
620 current call. This involves a potentially dangerous, higher  
621 speed, lights and siren responses and removes public safety  
622 personnel from their legitimate duties.

623           Should there be an actual need in that same geographical  
624 area, help must come from further away making someone experiencing  
625 a medical emergency or a crime victim wait unnecessarily for  
626 potentially lifesaving resources. Furthermore, depending on the  
627 details of the swatting call, tactical team members, negotiators,  
628 and specialty fire and rescue personnel and their equipment are  
629 often dispatched to these scenes.

630           When first responders arrive, an attempt to contact potential  
631 victims and suspects at what it is believed to be an active and

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632 volatile scene it becomes potentially dangerous for all parties.

633 At one such encounter in Kansas this led to an innocent father  
634 of two being fatally shot by responding law enforcement officers  
635 who legitimately believed he was a threat at that scene.

636 Investigation of that event led to a California man being charged  
637 with being responsible for the swatting event where the call was  
638 initiated.

639 In the recent past in my jurisdiction, Montgomery County  
640 has received multiple swatting calls. One event involved a  
641 message claiming that bombs had been planted in a Silver Spring  
642 high school which led to an emergency response by public safety  
643 and evacuation of approximately 2,000 students and staff. This  
644 call was ultimately determined to have come from out of state.

645 Fortunately there were no reported injuries, but resources  
646 were deployed, teaching and learning came to a halt that day,  
647 and due to the weather students and staff had to be housed at  
648 other nearby schools and places of worship causing other  
649 disruption. This doesn't begin to address the cost of long-term  
650 investigative efforts and also the potential emotional toll taken  
651 on students and staff who are affected by these types of calls.

652 In conclusion, I believe this bill is necessary to augment  
653 state and local efforts with federal resources to investigate

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654 swatting events, and in the end individuals who initiate these  
655 calls will be more easily held responsible by employing  
656 appropriate fines, incarceration, and specific cost recovery from  
657 suspects for expenses incurred during the response and  
658 investigation. I thank you for your attention.

659 [The prepared statement of Mr. Starks follows:]

660

661 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 3\*\*\*\*\*

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662 Mr. Lance. Thank you very much, Captain Starks. And to  
663 the entire panel, thank you for your public service.

664 I will begin the questioning and recognize myself for 5  
665 minutes. I had the opportunity to tour the 9-1-1 call center  
666 operated by Mr. Curry in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. It is  
667 the county where I live. It is a relatively small county, 130,000  
668 residents. We only have 21 counties in New Jersey with nine  
669 million people, so it is one of our smaller counties.

670 Mr. Curry, how much funding have you received from the state  
671 9-1-1 system over the past 10 years?

672 Mr. Curry. From the state, zero.

673 Mr. Lance. Where does the majority or perhaps the entirety  
674 of your funding come from?

675 Mr. Curry. Taxpayer money.

676 Mr. Lance. Taxpayer money, but not from state coffers.

677 Mr. Curry. No, it is local property tax.

678 Mr. Lance. From the property tax burden. What is your  
679 county's long-term plan for upgrading to Next Gen 9-1-1 given  
680 the lack of state funding?

681 Mr. Curry. As we wait for the Next Gen 9-1-1, there are  
682 vendors out there that can provide us with software similar to  
683 the Next Gen 9-1-1, but it comes at a very high price tag. So

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684 it is questionable if we will actually be able to afford that.

685 Until then, we will just continue conducting business as we do.

686 Mr. Lance. Thank you.

687 Mr. Reyes, does the public, in your opinion, understand that  
688 in some states funds are diverted and that part of their monthly  
689 telephone bill is being collected to upgrade the systems when  
690 in fact that may not always be the case?

691 Mr. Reyes. I don't think they understand, but as I said,  
692 Mr. Lance, in the Commonwealth of Virginia that is not so much  
693 of a problem. So that is why it has not been a widely publicized  
694 issue for that.

695 Mr. Lance. You are doing a good job in Virginia.

696 Mr. Reyes. Well, the elected officials are, sir.

697 Mr. Lance. I commend you.

698 And what is the situation in Maryland, in your jurisdiction,  
699 Montgomery County?

700 Mr. Starks. What was the specific question?

701 Mr. Lance. The question relates to the funding that is  
702 received. Do you receive funding for these purposes from the  
703 state of Maryland?

704 Mr. Starks. Some generally, I can't confirm the exact forms  
705 for the amounts or percentages.

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706 Mr. Lance. Thank you.

707 Regarding Congresswoman Brooks' fine legislation, would any  
708 member of this distinguished panel care to comment on it and on  
709 your views as to how we should move forward regarding Congresswoman  
710 Brooks' legislation?

711 Mr. Starks. Is that for the cost recovery?

712 Mr. Lance. No, no, on emergency calls.

713 Mr. Reyes?

714 Mr. Reyes. Yes. I will start with that, Mr. Lance. So  
715 that is a mixed one for us. So while we think that there should  
716 be standard --

717 Mr. Lance. I am a hundred percent for it, but --

718 Mr. Reyes. So while I think that, you know, it makes sense  
719 to come up with a standardized non-emergency number that is across  
720 the country similar to what we have right now for the emergency  
721 number, the concerns with that is that centers would start to  
722 receive a lot more volume and that we wouldn't have sufficient  
723 personnel.

724 So I think it is a good idea providing that there was funding  
725 considerations given to additional staffing in the centers.

726 Mr. Lance. Very good. Would any other member of the panel  
727 like to comment? Mr. Curry?

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728 Mr. Curry. Sure, Congressman, thank you. In the state of  
729 New Jersey we have pound 7-7, which is informally known as the  
730 snitch number, which is when you can dial that number in for  
731 aggressive drivers, people on cell phones and stuff.

732 Mr. Lance. Yes.

733 Mr. Curry. We also have 5-1-1, which is another number,  
734 which gives you an automated instructions for traffic.

735 Mr. Lance. I see.

736 Mr. Curry. So even in amongst the state of New Jersey we  
737 have two different numbers that can be confused.

738 Mr. Lance. It is confusing.

739 Mr. Curry. So I would appreciate that in my state.

740 Mr. Lance. Captain Starks?

741 Mr. Starks. To echo what Mr. Reyes said, this is a good  
742 idea for this national non-emergency code or number but as long  
743 as the staffing is also provided.

744 Before coming here I spoke with the director of our ECC.  
745 He is for anything that can free up 9-1-1 lines for true emergencies  
746 and get the non-emergency calls which every center receives  
747 directed to the non-emergency lines.

748 Mr. Lance. Thank you.

749 Without objection, I will enter into the record the following

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39

750 documents: A letter from the Hunterdon County Freeholders --  
751 freeholders in New Jersey are county commissioners -- in support  
752 of H.R. 6424, the bill I am sponsoring, and an article on the  
753 9-1-1 fee diversion in New Jersey, without objection.

754 [The information follows:]

755

756 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 4\*\*\*\*\*

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757 Mr. Lance. And now I am pleased to recognize the ranking  
758 member, Mr. Doyle of Pittsburgh.

759 Mr. Doyle. Thank you, Mr. Lance. Snitch number, huh? That  
760 is only in Jersey would they call it a snitch number.

761 Mr. Lance. Thank you for that very nice compliment, Mr.  
762 Ranking Member.

763 Mr. Doyle. Well, I will tell you I would like to call that  
764 number every time I see somebody texting while they are driving  
765 their car.

766 So let me ask a question for the entire panel. Maybe we  
767 can just start with Mr. Reyes and go forward. You know, as all  
768 of you are considering the cost of maintaining and upgrading 9-1-1  
769 systems to enhance the next generation systems, are you concerned  
770 that the current federal, state, and local funding structures  
771 are sufficient to deploy a robust and resilient national 9-1-1  
772 system?

773 Do you any of you believe there is a funding shortfall  
774 nationally that may leave many communities behind? What is your  
775 thoughts on or how confident do you feel that the funding exists  
776 for you to put that kind of a system in?

777 Mr. Reyes. So in Virginia I can tell you that most 9-1-1  
778 center directors are grossly underbudgeted. And so there is not

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779 enough budgeting especially not for Next Generation 9-1-1. In  
780 the National Capital Region, the Northern Virginia center  
781 directors are implementing Next Generation 9-1-1 as a region,  
782 not so much as an individual, just to take advantage of, you know,  
783 multiple purchases reducing the cost. And I can tell you that  
784 we are, you know, moving our different priorities around to make  
785 sure to accommodate that.

786 At the federal and state level, again I don't agree that  
787 there is sufficient funding being directed towards 9-1-1 centers.

788 I think what we would need in order to get to that level is a  
789 bill similar to the bill that brought FirstNet on for national  
790 broadband. Give that same level of attention and funding to Next  
791 Generation 9-1-1.

792 Mr. Doyle. Thanks, Mr. Reyes.

793 Mr. Curry?

794 Mr. Curry. As it stands today, with 89 percent of the phone  
795 bill fees being diverted away there is obviously not enough money.

796 Only 11 percent is going towards 9-1-1 at all at the state level.

797 Mr. Doyle. This is in New Jersey?

798 Mr. Curry. This is in the state of New Jersey. And I have  
799 full faith in the state of New Jersey that the people who handle  
800 9-1-1 at that level that they can get us Next Gen 9-1-1, but they

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801 would need proper funding to do so.

802 Mr. Doyle. Thank you.

803 Mr. Starks?

804 Mr. Starks. Thank you. To save time I would say similar  
805 to what they said, and in Montgomery County a specific example  
806 is that the funding isn't there. Right now we have mandatory  
807 overtime for workers there and there is an incredible turnover.  
808 I don't think that is unique across the country.

809 Mr. Doyle. Yes. I would just reiterate to my colleagues,  
810 if we want to get this problem solved it is going to take more  
811 resources and I think there is just no doubt about that. It seems  
812 like swatting is only getting more and more commonplace. I get  
813 calls all the time that are not only my area code, but my local  
814 dialing code. And I am thinking it is somebody that I know because  
815 the number looks familiar and it is -- well, you don't know who  
816 it is. It is a tape recording or something else saying that they  
817 want you to do something. But, and I think, you know, we see  
818 this swatting as putting more and more people at risk every day  
819 too when it involves, you know, phony calls that require first  
820 responders to do something, you know, the question is there.

821 Are you all getting concerned that it is getting harder to  
822 verify a caller's identity and location? Do you see this is as

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823 a problem and are your people experiencing more and more incidents  
824 of not being able to correctly identify a caller's name and  
825 location?

826 Mr. Reyes. So in Prince William County, Mr. Doyle, it is  
827 difficult to find legitimate callers, people that are calling  
828 9-1-1 because they can't breathe or they are having a robbery  
829 in progress, let alone the swatters. The swatters, the  
830 experiences that we have had, we had one just a couple months  
831 ago at a school and that person was out of the country, the IP  
832 address that was tracked down wasn't even in the United States.

833 So of course even if we were to track that person down, prosecution  
834 would be nearly impossible.

835 Mr. Doyle. Any others have comments on that?

836 Mr. Curry. To echo what Mr. Reyes said, we had one recently.  
837 And we work in a -- I wouldn't say that it is getting harder  
838 for us to track people down, but it is surely not getting easier  
839 and Next Gen 9-1-1 would help us with that. But also to  
840 echo the captain as well, for a small center like ours when we  
841 get one of those calls we don't have a lot of redundant resources  
842 in the form of personnel. So when we get a call like that it  
843 is all hands on deck and it really does detract from somebody  
844 else who could possibly be having a legitimate emergency.

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845 Mr. Doyle. Yes. It is a real problem.

846 Mr. Starks. Mr. Doyle, in your opening statement you used  
847 the terms "malicious," "deadly," and I believe "wasteful," and  
848 you are dead-on there. There is just a ripple effect when these  
849 calls come in and many times it is a larger scale event like a  
850 school, but sometimes it is a residence, somebody of some  
851 notoriety.

852 In one instance in Montgomery County it was a national news  
853 broadcaster who wasn't home. And dispatchers and good cops who  
854 were responding recognized some of the characteristics of this  
855 call and really put some information together and determined that  
856 this man wasn't even home but was in New York City, made contact  
857 with him and really diverted a lot of resources from coming and  
858 stopped a potentially dangerous situation from occurring.

859 Mr. Doyle. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

860 Mr. Lance. Thank you. And the chair now recognizes Mr.  
861 Shimkus.

862 Mr. Shimkus. Thank you, great to have you. Thank you for  
863 your service, all of you. I am going to be pretty brief and short  
864 because I think the bills are pretty clear and I think they identify  
865 problems and we have got to move the process forward.

866 But, first of all, I just wanted to mention that here, across

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867 the country, and even in Washington, D.C. it is kind of all opioids  
868 all the time and so we allowed the naloxone to be administered  
869 by first responders in this most recent package. I think we want  
870 to obviously have the appropriate training, so I think there is  
871 some funding to allow training for that to happen because we know  
872 with that ability to help comes a risk and we have seen that in  
873 the first-line responders.

874 So I would ask the associations to keep us posted on what  
875 we may be doing to be helpful and what things we are doing that  
876 may not be helpful.

877 This fee diversion thing has been a bone of contention with  
878 me for a long time. I have been in the 9-1-1 debate especially  
879 in the cellular side since I have been a member and my state was  
880 pretty good at first and then it became bad and now rumors are  
881 that they are labeled as good. But I am worried about the gaming  
882 of the system by states by filing that they are not diverting  
883 and then as soon as it has been listed that they are not a diversion  
884 state they divert.

885 Do you see any of that gaming going on in the system from  
886 your observations? Probably Mr. Curry is probably the best.

887 Mr. Lance. You have a right to remain silent, Mr. Curry.

888 Mr. Curry. I don't know that it is good or bad that you

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889 called on me for that. You know, if I sounded too negative about  
890 the state of New Jersey I didn't mean to be. In fact, they are  
891 one of the states that when they were asked did come forward and  
892 they were truthful in how they do spend the money. I think it  
893 is going to just require a constant observation by the FCC.

894 Mr. Shimkus. Well, I think the benefit of my colleague Mr.  
895 Lance's bill it ensures that states do the right thing. And I  
896 think Congressman Lance is right on, or actually Chairman Walden  
897 too. We see this in other things. When you collect money for  
898 a certain purpose and not use it for that purpose most average  
899 Americans would not get away with what governments are allowed  
900 to get away with.

901 So, well, let me ask Mr. Curry, on the accounting side loss,  
902 so for a year you probably have a projection of what you should  
903 receive and if you don't receive that is there any hope and  
904 expectation that you will receive it or is it a loss, year by  
905 year it is gone?

906 Mr. Curry. There is never a projection to receive anything.  
907 I know from every year that from the state I am going to receive  
908 zero.

909 Mr. Shimkus. But you should be able to know since it is  
910 a fee on -- don't you have a projection of what you hope to get?

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911 Mr. Curry. That figure would be what the state takes in  
912 and then how they decide to spend that money would be up to them.

913 Mr. Shimkus. Yes, I would think that there would be a better  
914 way. I guess the way I am trying to ask the question is since  
915 you don't know what the apportioned amount might be there is no  
916 way that you book hopeful incoming revenue so that you can't book  
917 loss because you are never projecting revenue.

918 Mr. Curry. Correct. I never project revenue from the  
919 state.

920 Mr. Shimkus. Yes. Well, I am sorry to hear that. Let me,  
921 I guess the last thing is for -- I represent 33 counties in southern  
922 Illinois so obviously most of them are -- yours would be a good  
923 county in my congressional district. It would probably be the  
924 biggest county in my congressional district. Having said  
925 that, fee diversions for rural, small operating systems are  
926 probably, would you say there is an exponential challenge for  
927 rurals because of the cost, you just don't have the numbers?  
928 And what about the PSAPs really cover multiple areas so there  
929 may be a cascading event. Is that appropriate to word it that  
930 way?

931 Mr. Curry. I think what you are asking me and I hope I am  
932 answering this correctly, there are certain requirements that

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933 you must have if you have a 9-1-1 center. It doesn't matter if  
934 you are a big 9-1-1 center or a small 9-1-1 center. You have  
935 to have CAD system. You have to have a recorder. You have the  
936 continued maintenance on all this equipment. Again for us  
937 all that money is paid for by the taxpayer. And for these  
938 taxpayers they are paying for it twice.

939 Mr. Shimkus. Yes, great. Thank you very much.

940 I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

941 Mr. Lance. Thank you, Mr. Shimkus. The chair recognizes  
942 Mr. McNerney.

943 Mr. McNerney. Well, I thank the chairman and I thank the  
944 panelists. I am going to change the subject a little bit if you  
945 don't mind too much.

946 Our nation is facing a growing number of cybersecurity  
947 threats. For example, the Mirai botnet that was used in the DDoS  
948 attacks, WannaCry that had infiltrated hospital systems, and the  
949 Spectre and Meltdown chip vulnerabilities. So it is clear that  
950 we need to be more vigilant in protecting against cybersecurity  
951 threat. Now this is especially important in the case when it  
952 comes to protecting the safety infrastructure that we have. After  
953 all, how can public safety officials protect the public from harm  
954 if their own systems are vulnerable to attack?

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955           So, Mr. Reyes, would you agree that it is something that  
956 we need to be concerned about?

957           Mr. Reyes. Yes, absolutely, sir. We just had a meeting  
958 this week, the 9-1-1 centers of Northern Virginia -- Ms. Gordon  
959 who is here representing Alexandria -- and that was one of the  
960 issues that was in our agenda. And this is where the 9-1-1 funds  
961 that are given to 9-1-1 centers are being diverted. We are talking  
962 at the Northern Virginia region how to as a region, bring about  
963 one vendor that can give us the same level of protection across  
964 the board.

965           So that is something that is very high up on our agenda and  
966 we desperately are dedicating funding for protecting our networks  
967 because they are crippling on a regular basis around here, around  
968 the Beltway. And, you know, the vendors just chalk it up to,  
969 oh, we had a network issue, but we know that it is happening way  
970 too common for it to just be network issues all the time.

971           Mr. McNerney. Thank you.

972           Mr. Curry and Mr. Starks, do you also agree?

973           Mr. Curry. I agree. I don't have anything to add.

974           Mr. Starks. Yes.

975           Mr. McNerney. Well, what challenges do you face when it  
976 comes to protecting your own systems against the potential cyber

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977 threats, Mr. Reyes?

978 Mr. Reyes. Well, it is the same threats and challenges that  
979 everyone else faces including, you know, the Department of Defense  
980 where our networks are constantly being attacked. The threats  
981 are growing stronger on a regular basis, but yet unfortunately  
982 at the local municipal level we don't have the resources both  
983 in personnel and in funding to address or tackle those types of  
984 constant threats.

985 So we are not in a proactive mode, we are more in a reactive  
986 mode. Unfortunately for us we would like to see when we are  
987 getting an attack to be able to prevent it. Unfortunately for  
988 some of the denials of service that we have witnessed it has been  
989 after the fact and we would like to prevent them and make sure  
990 they don't happen.

991 Mr. McNerney. Well, I mean you were talking about some of  
992 the steps that you have taken. What are some of the things that  
993 you think that we in Congress could do to help you better protect  
994 your systems?

995 Mr. Reyes. Well, funding of course is always the number  
996 one thing. And of course number two is some dedicated federal  
997 legislation that when we identify these individuals that are in  
998 our home and our home country be able to put some significant

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999 fines and punishment behind these individuals so that it could  
1000 hopefully serve as a deterrence to others.

1001 Mr. McNerney. Thank you. I also want to talk about  
1002 wildfires. In Northern California we have witnessed some  
1003 devastating wildfires and it is absolutely critical that first  
1004 responders have access to information as quickly as possible.  
1005 Now in a recent incident, data service was slowed down for first  
1006 responders battling wildfires and that is completely  
1007 unacceptable. The wildfires have also drawn attention to the  
1008 importance of wireless emergency alerts.

1009 So, Mr. Reyes, given your experience in public safety what  
1010 are some of the reasons why counties would choose not to use  
1011 wireless emergency services?

1012 Mr. Reyes. Well, coverage is one of them. And the scenario  
1013 that you described, while there was allegations of the vendor  
1014 deliberately throttling back bandwidth the most significant  
1015 concern when that is not the issue is just getting coverage in  
1016 those rural and remote areas. So that is one of them.

1017 The other one is overloading of the system. Because most  
1018 of us are on commercial wireless networks, when you have a  
1019 convergence of a lot of mutual aid and lots of first responders  
1020 they very quickly overwhelm a commercial wireless system, whereas

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1021 if we were to be on a dedicated network like FirstNet that should  
1022 not happen.

1023 Mr. McNerney. Do you have anything to add, Mr. Curry?

1024 Mr. Curry. Actually I was just informed this past week by  
1025 a vendor, by a representative of AT&T, we did buy into the FirstNet  
1026 system. We are the first county dispatch center in New Jersey  
1027 to do so, and again they assured that there would be no throttling  
1028 back on the FirstNet system. As Mr. Reyes said, we do have some  
1029 coverage issues in the county, but it is early on yet.

1030 Mr. McNerney. Well, how important, Mr. Reyes, do you think  
1031 it is to have appropriate officials to receive the necessary  
1032 training to administer these alerts then?

1033 Mr. Reyes. Very important, yes.

1034 Mr. McNerney. Okay.

1035 Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

1036 Mr. Lance. Thank you very much. The chair recognizes Mr.  
1037 Guthrie.

1038 Mr. Guthrie. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the  
1039 opportunity to be here and I have a few questions. And I am sorry.

1040 I have been -- a couple other hearings are going on so I have  
1041 been bouncing in and out, but I will try not to repeat what has  
1042 already been asked or said.

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1043           So these are for Mr. Curry. Do you think states should be  
1044 required to report the fees they divert to FCC? Right now the  
1045 FCC study is voluntary. And is there any other information you  
1046 don't get to include on the FCC study that you wish you could?

1047           Mr. Curry. To ensure that the money was being spent the  
1048 way that taxpayers expect the money to be paid, I would have to  
1049 say yes that there should be FCC oversight.

1050           Mr. Guthrie. For the study. And do you think there is some  
1051 information you would like to include that is not in the study  
1052 now? Is there additional information?

1053           Mr. Curry. Not if the bill looked to be fairly thorough  
1054 and complete.

1055           Mr. Guthrie. Fairly thorough, okay. How does a county in  
1056 a diverting state with multiple call centers handle this  
1057 situation? Do they have to choose which call centers to upgrade  
1058 or which call centers get to hire more staff or do they evenly  
1059 split the funds among the call centers?

1060           Mr. Curry. Among local call centers in New Jersey no one  
1061 has received any money.

1062           Mr. Guthrie. No one has seen any money, okay.

1063           Mr. Curry. Out of the 11 percent that was spent on 9-1-1  
1064 it did not reach the local level.

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1065 Mr. Guthrie. It didn't get to the county level. Okay.  
1066 And then what are some of the features your 9-1-1 system is missing  
1067 because you have been unable to upgrade due to financial  
1068 constraints?

1069 Mr. Curry. The biggest hurdle we have is caller location.  
1070 We don't have Next Gen 9-1-1 and the software is very expensive  
1071 to purchase for us to give us the ability to do that without the  
1072 Next Gen 9-1-1. We would have to have an outside vendor provide  
1073 us with that software.

1074 Mr. Guthrie. Okay, I appreciate, well, I appreciate that  
1075 and that is my questions. So I will yield back my time.

1076 Mr. Lance. The chair recognizes Ms. Clarke.

1077 Ms. Clarke. I thank Chairman Lance and Ranking Member Doyle  
1078 for convening this very important hearing on public safety  
1079 communications. I am pleased that the subcommittee is  
1080 considering the Anti-swatting Act introduced by my colleague and  
1081 fellow New Yorker Mr. Engel.

1082 Over the past several years, the practice of swatting has  
1083 increased in prominence. Swatters who have often been involved  
1084 in online disputes make hoax calls to emergency response teams  
1085 leading to their deployment. The practice has resulted in wasted  
1086 law enforcement resources and physical harm, even death, to its

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1087 unsuspecting victims.

1088           So my first question is actually to Captain Starks. I have  
1089 read stories of Parkland activist David Hogg being the victim  
1090 of swatting and worry that such techniques may be used to stifle  
1091 debate and free expression in addition to all of the other harm  
1092 that it causes. In your experience are swatting calls being  
1093 targeted at particular populations or types of individuals?

1094           Mr. Starks. Yes, and I don't think it is unique to Montgomery  
1095 County. It has been schools where I mentioned had to be evacuated  
1096 and housed because of the weather that day, but also people of  
1097 notoriety as well are targeted. And the intent is to bringing  
1098 all kinds of resources and then when you do that the potential  
1099 dangerous situation to anyone who may be at that location whether  
1100 it is a business or a residence with that kind of response.

1101           Ms. Clarke. Is there a psychological profile that is sort  
1102 of beginning to, I guess, come to the fore around individuals  
1103 who would engage in these swatting tactics?

1104           Mr. Starks. None that I know of. But it seems just to be  
1105 a younger population. The example I mentioned where the school  
1106 was evacuated, I believe the person was a juvenile located outside  
1107 of this country.

1108           Ms. Clarke. Wow, okay. Law enforcement officers face

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1109 difficult choices in the best of circumstances and I am concerned  
1110 that swatting calls might be particularly devastating in some  
1111 minority communities where unfortunately there might already be  
1112 tensions with law enforcement.

1113 So Captain Starks, what can we do to deter swatters and help  
1114 police officers safely respond to these dangerous hoaxes  
1115 regardless of where they are called in?

1116 Mr. Starks. I think more discussion about this, more  
1117 education to the public that this is not a joke. It is not a  
1118 hoax but it does cause, as been mentioned, a waste of resources,  
1119 resources being stripped away from what they would normally be  
1120 doing. But more importantly, there is a potential danger to  
1121 anyone on both sides of this issue, the responders and whoever  
1122 happens to be home.

1123 I think the education piece is one part of it and I think  
1124 the components of this legislation are important as well to make  
1125 it a federal crime. And of particular interest to my ECC director  
1126 was the cost recovery where we can provide an accounting or a  
1127 local jurisdiction could provide an accounting and then get those  
1128 dollars back from the group or an individual who caused it to  
1129 occur.

1130 Ms. Clarke. Very well. And law enforcement has sometimes

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1131 had difficulty classifying swatting under current laws. Some  
1132 cases have resulted in charges related to cyber terrorism while  
1133 others have approached the issue as a criminal mischief. How  
1134 would you classify swatting under our current legal system?

1135 Mr. Starks. Well, it would be a criminal offense to make  
1136 a false call in the state of Maryland, to make a false, you know,  
1137 emergency call. But this additional legislation would clearly  
1138 add more bite to it.

1139 Ms. Clarke. Very well. Some swatters have been convicted  
1140 under federal criminal statutes. How would Mr. Engel's bill help  
1141 law enforcement officers and prosecutors contain the threats posed  
1142 by swatting?

1143 Mr. Starks. I think with the more specific legislation that  
1144 has been mentioned and the ability to have some options depending  
1145 on the circumstances of the allegations -- local, state, or federal  
1146 -- gives us more options and more advantage over these criminals.

1147 Ms. Clarke. Well, I thank you very much, Captain Starks.  
1148 And I thank all of our witnesses for your expertise this morning  
1149 and I yield back.

1150 Mr. Lance. Thank you, Ms. Clarke. The chair recognizes  
1151 Mr. Olson for 5 minutes.

1152 Mr. Olson. I thank the chair and welcome to our three

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1153 witnesses. Also I want to thank you all for your years, decades  
1154 of service on the thin blue line. Thank you, thank you, thank  
1155 you, for that.

1156 My questions will focus on one big storm, Hurricane Harvey.  
1157 Now as you all know it hit my hometown, my home region twice  
1158 moving very, very slow. It dropped on average 40 inches of rain  
1159 in 2 days, almost four feet of rain over almost all of Southeast  
1160 Texas. 9-1-1 was overwhelmed with calls. As Ranking Member  
1161 Doyle mentioned in his opening statement, people could not get  
1162 through with the calls. One example I heard back home, a senior  
1163 citizen, his wife, their home was flooding. They called 9-1-1  
1164 for about an hour, could not get through. Somehow they planned  
1165 to go to Chick-fil-A after they were rescued. They made that  
1166 call to Chick-fil-A that went through. And for some reason only  
1167 known to God and luck, Chick-fil-A showed up and rescued those  
1168 two people.

1169 Mr. Curry, before this hearing you told me a great story  
1170 about how a big difference between Kingwood, New Jersey and  
1171 Kingwood, Texas. And prior to Hurricane Harvey someone was  
1172 misrouted from Kingwood, Texas to Kingwood, New Jersey and your  
1173 people stuck with this person over and over and got them rescued  
1174 back home in Kingwood, Texas. So thank you for that again, but

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1175 that is lucky as opposed to having a plan.

1176 I want to talk about the Brooks-Eshoo bill, the H.R. 5700  
1177 National Emergency Mobile Number Act. And my hometown of Sugar  
1178 Land has a 3-1-1 system already that opened up last year I found  
1179 out at the mayor's big annual State of the City address, it works.

1180 About 2 months ago I am riding down my street. There is a big  
1181 branch on the sidewalk. I called up 3-1-1; within hours that  
1182 branch is gone. But my neighbors had no clue that 3-1-1 was  
1183 available, no idea it was out there. And so the question is  
1184 how can people determine, how do you determine what is a true  
1185 emergency for 9-1-1 and what is a non-emergency for 3-1-1? Can  
1186 callers differentiate between 9-1-1 and 3-1-1, in your opinion,  
1187 Mr. Reyes, Mr. Curry, and Mr. Starks? What are the challenges  
1188 there to get them to know what is really an emergency and what  
1189 is not?

1190 Mr. Reyes. So, sir, we do not have 3-1-1 in Prince William  
1191 County, but from talking to some municipalities that do have 3-1-1  
1192 they embed in the voice calling options. If you dialed 3-1-1  
1193 for example, when it answers, the voice tree answers, it says  
1194 if you have an emergency press one and then it reroutes you over  
1195 to 9-1-1. So that is my only experience with 3-1-1, but we are  
1196 not a 3-1-1 municipality.

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1197 Mr. Olson. How do you deal with Chick-fil-A calling up you  
1198 guys at 9-1-1? How do you deal with that situation? How do you  
1199 get them off your line because that is clearly not an emergency?

1200 Mr. Reyes. Well, that happens on our ten-digit  
1201 non-emergency. So our county has a ten-digit non-emergency  
1202 number that the county residents use and so when they dial 9-1-1  
1203 and it is a non-emergency call our call takers divert them to  
1204 the non-emergency calls internally.

1205 And then we are doing an education program within our county  
1206 at the school level where we are reaching out to kids. We just  
1207 awarded four kids on Saturday, awards for making the right call  
1208 --

1209 Mr. Olson. Awesome.

1210 Mr. Reyes. -- because at school they learned the awesome  
1211 power of 9-1-1 and how to use it properly. So I think we have  
1212 to do something similar with the non-emergency number.

1213 Mr. Olson. Great. Mr. Curry, your comments on --

1214 Mr. Curry. Because we handle all the phone calls for each  
1215 municipal police agency in Hunterdon County, if somebody were  
1216 to call on the non-emergency and they do, they call on the  
1217 non-emergency ten-digit number, because all the calls come to  
1218 the same center it wouldn't be an issue for us.

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1219 Mr. Olson. Yes.

1220 Mr. Curry. Because the same dispatchers who take the 9-1-1  
1221 calls, they are in that same room and they can just as easily  
1222 handle that 3-1-1, for example. And we are going to take the  
1223 same number of calls if it is 9-1-1, 3-1-1 or the ten-digit number  
1224 because if they are going to call they are going to call. It  
1225 is just a matter of the method in which they decide to use and  
1226 what is most beneficial for them and what is most beneficial for  
1227 us.

1228 Mr. Olson. Captain Starks?

1229 Mr. Starks. What Mr. Reyes said, we have a ten-digit  
1230 non-emergency number but getting that number in people's heads  
1231 is very, very tough and 9-1-1 is just so much easier to remember.

1232 The county has started a 3-1-1 line. It is separate from our  
1233 emergency call center and it is a very deliberate process, but  
1234 what Mr. Reyes said at the beginning, if you think you have an  
1235 emergency that message is given and it directs people to the 9-1-1.

1236 Mr. Olson. I am about out of time. I have one question  
1237 remaining about the Anti-Swatting Act and this is for all three  
1238 witnesses, a simple yes or no answer. I just want to ensure that  
1239 H.R. 6003, the Anti-Swatting Act, has no effect on my Houston  
1240 Astros swatting the heck out of the American League rivals and

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1241 National League champion in regard to our repeat of the World  
1242 Series.

1243 Does this affect my Houston Astros swatting the National  
1244 League and the American League?

1245 Mr. Reyes. No.

1246 Mr. Curry. I would think not.

1247 Mr. Starks. No, sir.

1248 Mr. Olson. There you go. That is what I want to hear.

1249 I yield back.

1250 Mr. Lance. Your time is expired, Mr. Olson.

1251 Mr. Engel, you are recognized.

1252 Mr. Engel. Thank you. And let me tell my friend and  
1253 colleague Mr. Olson that the Bill 6003, the Anti-Swatting Act,  
1254 is my bill and you don't have to worry. The New York Yankees  
1255 are going to swat all the other teams.

1256 Mr. Olson. Repeat, repeat.

1257 Mr. Engel. So thank you, Chairman Lance and Ranking Member  
1258 Doyle, for holding today's hearing and including my bill, the  
1259 Anti-Swatting Act, 6003. And I want to thank Yvette Clarke for  
1260 highlighting some of the things of that bill. According to  
1261 the FBI, a single SWAT team deployment can cost thousands of  
1262 taxpayers' dollars. It obviously wastes law enforcement's time

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1263 which prevents them from responding to real emergencies. And  
1264 most importantly, it risks injury to unassuming victims as well  
1265 as to the officials who mount a response.

1266 One of the most tragic examples took place last December  
1267 in Wichita, Kansas where officers shot and killed an unarmed  
1268 28-year-old man on his front doorstep after receiving a phony  
1269 call alleging an ongoing crime. This is a very serious problem  
1270 and that is why we introduce this bill to address it. My  
1271 bill would expand on the Truth in Caller ID Act that Chairman  
1272 Emeritus Joe Barton and I introduced and it signed into law in  
1273 2010. In last Congress my Anti-swatting Act was amended and  
1274 favorably reported out of our committee but it did not come up  
1275 for a vote on the floor. So we have a real opportunity now.

1276 The current version of my bill includes the amendments we  
1277 passed last Congress and in short my Anti-swatting Act would  
1278 increase penalties for people who falsify their caller ID  
1279 information to mislead law enforcement. This technological trick  
1280 called spoofing allows swatters to hide their identity by making  
1281 law enforcement believe that they are calling in an emergency  
1282 from a different phone booth, phone number, a phone number or  
1283 location. The bill would also force swatters to reimburse  
1284 emergency service entities for the resources they spend responding

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1285 to the invented emergency.

1286 So I would like to ask Captain Starks or anybody else who  
1287 would care to answer, when law enforcement receives a swatting  
1288 call you obviously don't know when you have received it that it  
1289 is a phony, that is it a fake. Can you explain how law enforcement  
1290 responds to such a call?

1291 Mr. Starks. Sure. The people in the 9-1-1 center have to  
1292 begin vetting some of the details of that call as they are being  
1293 dispatched to the first responders. Usually a swatting call has  
1294 some details regarding violence where the caller state maybe he  
1295 or she has already shot someone, is there with a higher powered  
1296 weapon, that kind of thing, someone else is in danger.

1297 So that activates not only the first cops on the street  
1298 responding but also tactical units, negotiators who come, and  
1299 then fire and rescue services who have to come by and respond  
1300 to treat who may be injured there and who may become injured there  
1301 as well. So it is wave after wave after wave of affecting public  
1302 safety.

1303 Mr. Engel. You know, it is really a sick thing, you know,  
1304 you wonder what kind of a fool would do something like this.  
1305 It is absolutely mind-boggling with total, you know, to play a  
1306 joke or to get a kick out of something to really put people's

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1307 lives in jeopardy. It is just absolutely disgraceful. Swatting  
1308 incidents have profound impacts on families too, I am sure you  
1309 would agree with that.

1310 Mr. Starks. Absolutely.

1311 Mr. Engel. My bill calls for increased penalties for  
1312 swatting including up to 20 years where the emergency response  
1313 results in serious bodily injury. Violators would also be  
1314 required to reimburse law enforcement entities for their expenses,  
1315 which is another thing in responding to the hoax. In your opinion  
1316 will that help?

1317 Mr. Starks. Yes, it will.

1318 Mr. Engel. Okay. Thank you very much and thank you for  
1319 the good work you do. I don't know if Mr. Reyes or Mr. Curry  
1320 have any comments.

1321 Mr. Reyes. The only thing I would add to what we all have  
1322 discussed here on the swatting thing is something that is often  
1323 overlooked is that oftentimes these could be diverted actions  
1324 to divert law enforcement attention from perhaps another real-life  
1325 crime that is going to be taking place like a bank robbery for  
1326 example.

1327 So that is one of the things. And then on a much bigger  
1328 scale I don't think we should minimize the importance that this

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1329 plays to homeland security issues around the country. What if  
1330 this is just some rehearsals for these would-be homeland  
1331 terrorists that are just seeing how responders are going to be  
1332 responding so that they can then prepare for a larger, real-life  
1333 attack?

1334 Mr. Engel. Well, two very good points. Thank you and thank  
1335 all three of you. We appreciate it.

1336 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1337 Mr. Lance. Thank you very much. The chair recognizes Mr.  
1338 Bilirakis.

1339 Mr. Bilirakis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate it  
1340 and I welcome the witnesses. Thank you for their testimony.  
1341 I was actually downstairs at the hearing so we have two going  
1342 on at once. I also want to acknowledge my constituent, a paramedic  
1343 Maya Daniels, who was recognized as a local, first responder of  
1344 the year for going above and beyond. Thank you for your service,  
1345 gentlemen, I appreciate it so very much.

1346 Moving on to questions, I want to address an issue related  
1347 to the Anti-swatting Act. I know this has been discussed but  
1348 I have a specific question here, which is impacting of course  
1349 our general population. The number of scam calls to Americans  
1350 has increased from about four percent of the calls in 2017 to

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1351 about 29 percent this year, and now a new report from First Orion  
1352 projects a 45 percent of all sale calls will be from scammers  
1353 in 2019. It is unacceptable. It is just awful.

1354 My question is for both of you. Are you seeing significant  
1355 increases in fake emergency calls to your public safety systems  
1356 or non-emergency response lines regardless of whether they are  
1357 purposeful swatting calls or spoof calls and will the bills being  
1358 discussed today protect against these threats?

1359 And we will start with Mr. Curry if that is okay.

1360 Mr. Curry. I don't have any empirical data. I can say  
1361 anecdotally they are on the increase. I have been in this  
1362 particular business for a couple of years now and as I said, I  
1363 think we had one just a few months ago an actual swatting call.

1364 So again I would say that they are on the rise, but again I don't  
1365 have the data to back it up.

1366 Mr. Bilirakis. And what about the bills that are being  
1367 discussed today? Will they make a difference?

1368 Mr. Curry. I hope so.

1369 Mr. Bilirakis. In your opinion?

1370 Mr. Curry. I would hope that they would.

1371 Mr. Bilirakis. Okay, very good. Anyone else want to touch  
1372 that, any questions?

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1373 Mr. Reyes. So just like Mr. Curry I don't have any empirical  
1374 data either, but they are definitely steady in our municipality.  
1375 While they may not be on the increase they are definitely  
1376 constant. So that is one of the things.

1377 The three bills that we are talking about here today I think  
1378 will have a significant positive impact on the job that we do  
1379 every single day.

1380 Mr. Bilirakis. Good, good, good. And again if you have  
1381 any input on how we can improve in addition to those three bills,  
1382 please don't hesitate to -- I guess it is Mr. Starks?

1383 Mr. Starks. Just to echo what has been said is that this  
1384 legislation, I think Mr. Pallone in his statement said this will  
1385 also help keep first responders safer. And if first responders  
1386 are safer to include call takers and dispatchers then we can do  
1387 our job better in protecting the public.

1388 Mr. Bilirakis. Very good, thank you.

1389 Mr. Curry, in your testimony you mentioned that finding a  
1390 caller's location is determined through manual entries and  
1391 interrogation. Do you have any estimate on how long it typically  
1392 takes to get an accurate emergency location, or worse are there  
1393 situations where a location cannot be identified and can you  
1394 explain how the Next Generation 9-1-1 will help bring down these

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1395 numbers?

1396 Mr. Curry. If there is any delay at all that is a problem  
1397 because seconds count. So if it is just a couple of seconds to  
1398 locate where the caller is that is an issue.

1399 The other problem is, I had mentioned that, you know, we  
1400 have a major interstate. People call 9-1-1 because again that  
1401 is the universal number to call and they are moving. So as they  
1402 are moving we are still trying to track their location which is  
1403 very difficult and it has to be done by through manual entry and  
1404 again as I mentioned through interrogation. We get a lot of  
1405 transient traffic and they just don't know where they are. I  
1406 couldn't tell you how long it takes on an average, but the Next  
1407 Gen 9-1-1 and some of this other software I had mentioned before  
1408 would actually put the person's location within, I want to say  
1409 about three meters. And it would do it quickly and continuously.

1410 Mr. Bilirakis. Very good, thank you. And again thank you  
1411 for your service, appreciate it. Thanks for putting your lives  
1412 on the line to protect us and we need to be as helpful as we possibly  
1413 can. Thank you. I yield back.

1414 Mr. Lance. Thank you very much. The chair recognizes Mr.  
1415 Johnson for 5 minutes.

1416 Mr. Johnson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I too want to

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1417 thank you gentlemen for your service. Thanks for being here  
1418 today.

1419 Mr. Reyes and Captain Starks, shifting gears just a little  
1420 bit, what are some of the most extreme or alarming circumstances  
1421 where someone called 9-1-1 where they should have called a  
1422 non-emergency number? Do you have any examples? Mr.  
1423 Reyes, you can go first.

1424 Mr. Reyes. Well, when I was in Alexandria the most extreme  
1425 call that I recall was a resident who called asking for a medic  
1426 unit because they had run out of aspirin and they wanted an  
1427 ambulance to take them to the hospital.

1428 Mr. Johnson. They had run out of aspirin.

1429 Mr. Reyes. And they used 9-1-1 for that. So that is an  
1430 extreme example that I can give you.

1431 Mr. Johnson. Yes.

1432 Mr. Reyes. And that happens pretty regularly across centers  
1433 across America.

1434 Mr. Johnson. Captain Starks?

1435 Mr. Starks. Generally the abuse is calls for normal county  
1436 or government services for like snow or leaves or just they are  
1437 using it as 4-1-1, so like asking questions instead of needing  
1438 emergency services right away. There is a finite number of 9-1-1

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1439 lines in any emergency center and in that case that line is being  
1440 held up not being able to be used for any incoming emergency.

1441 Mr. Johnson. Okay. Have you noticed a higher number of  
1442 these calls coming from out-of-state travelers, any correlation  
1443 there?

1444 Mr. Reyes. You mean the calls that come into 9-1-1 that  
1445 should not be?

1446 Mr. Johnson. Yes. That should go to a non-emergency  
1447 number.

1448 Mr. Reyes. Yes, so just like Mr. Curry we have a major  
1449 interstate running through our county, I-95, and that generates  
1450 a lot of traffic, as well as a large shopping complex known as  
1451 Potomac Mills and that generates a lot of visitors and tourists  
1452 as well. And just like Captain Stark has indicated, oftentimes  
1453 rather than look for the ten-digit emergency number quite frankly  
1454 not even knowing what municipality they are in, everyone knows  
1455 that the universal number that is always going to get answered  
1456 no matter what square foot in America you are in is going to be  
1457 9-1-1. So that seems to be the default number when people have  
1458 a question and don't know who to ask.

1459 Mr. Johnson. Do you think they knew to call a non-emergency  
1460 number but just didn't have or know how to locate the non-emergency

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1461 number and do you think they would have called it if we had a  
1462 nationwide standardized non-emergency number, do you think that  
1463 would have helped?

1464 Mr. Reyes. I can only suspect yes, because I mean some of  
1465 the calls that we receive that are clearly non-emergency that  
1466 come into the emergency line are just at the common sense  
1467 perspective that person should have clearly known not to dial  
1468 9-1-1, but yet they are asking for directions to wherever they  
1469 are trying to go. And so they know that the de facto number that  
1470 is always going to get answered is 9-1-1.

1471 Mr. Johnson. Okay. Captain Starks?

1472 Mr. Starks. I would just echo the same through the sake  
1473 of time.

1474 Mr. Johnson. Okay. Continuing on this same thought, one  
1475 potential criticism of a broader uniform non-emergency mobile  
1476 number is the consumer education that would have to take place  
1477 to inform citizens of its existence. Some states have already  
1478 got such a number and so that creates a potentially even greater  
1479 need to standardize the process so that someone driving from one  
1480 state to the next doesn't have to worry about knowing multiple  
1481 numbers across the nation. What are some of the benefits,  
1482 gentlemen, of having a nationwide non-emergency number like that?

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1483 Mr. Reyes. Well, I will start. And again it would be to  
1484 take that unnecessary and unjustified volume of calls that come  
1485 into 9-1-1 to a dedicated number. But again just like all these  
1486 very successful campaigns that we have used like Buckle Up, things  
1487 like that where we teach children and start teaching at a very  
1488 young age and start teaching our residents the importance of the  
1489 number, then we can start focusing on a number.

1490 But like Mr. Curry said, in one state there could be three,  
1491 up to three 3-digit numbers and so the citizens get confused and  
1492 don't know which one to call, number one, or for what type of  
1493 event to use that number for.

1494 Mr. Johnson. And do either one of you gentlemen want to  
1495 -- anything more to add to that?

1496 Mr. Starks. I just believe that, you know, in the '70s we  
1497 went to the 9-1-1 system and we didn't have any type of resources  
1498 like we have now to communicate campaigns like the internet and  
1499 social media and that type of thing. It is about, I think,  
1500 education and changing the culture. It has been in my career  
1501 of 30 years, just the way drunk driving is viewed now in this  
1502 country that has changed, it is just taking a while. The same  
1503 thing can happen, but I think a lot quicker with a standardized  
1504 non-emergency number.

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1505 Mr. Johnson. Okay, all right.

1506 Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1507 Mr. Lance. Thank you very much, Mr. Johnson. The chair  
1508 recognizes Mrs. Brooks.

1509 Mrs. Brooks. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to continue on  
1510 this line of question about the bill that I introduced regarding  
1511 non-emergency numbers. And I want to ask you, Captain Starks,  
1512 you talked about in your career you have seen how 9-1-1 has become  
1513 so successful. How do you, do you have examples of how the public  
1514 does have a good understanding of the use of non-emergency numbers  
1515 in some of the states that do have it?

1516 Mr. Starks. I don't have any examples from out of state.  
1517 I think that within my jurisdiction, Montgomery County, there  
1518 is some understanding, but I think there is a great deal of  
1519 confusion and just ignorance or lack of knowledge in regarding  
1520 this ten-digit non-emergency number that we employ.

1521 Mrs. Brooks. And so would it be fair to say that you would  
1522 like to see a shorter number that because so many people go from  
1523 one community to another in the area that you represent, if we  
1524 had a very simple three-digit number wouldn't that be incredibly  
1525 advantageous?

1526 Mr. Starks. It sure would be in the first look. But Mr.

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1527 Reyes also spoke earlier of just cautionary about making sure  
1528 that funding and staffing is there because it is going to cause  
1529 an increase of calls to the center. But yes, a uniform number  
1530 would be helpful.

1531 Mrs. Brooks. And, Mr. Reyes, going back, and I appreciate  
1532 -- I visited my PSAP in Indiana in Hamilton County and certainly  
1533 appreciate what the concern is about resources. But do we have  
1534 any data from the 9-1-1 from the PSAPs how many calls right now  
1535 come in that are non-emergency versus emergency?

1536 Mr. Reyes. Yes, ma'am. During my opening remarks I gave  
1537 that statistic for our agency and our organization receives more  
1538 non-emergency calls than emergency calls. Overall, we are at  
1539 400,000 calls total and of those 400,000 some 254,000 were  
1540 non-emergency.

1541 Mrs. Brooks. And so would you agree that if there were  
1542 resources as well as a public education campaign much like what  
1543 we have done and I think it is much easier now because of social  
1544 media and other and smart phones to be able to communicate what  
1545 that number would be if a person, you know, wanted to use a  
1546 non-emergency number.

1547 Mr. Reyes. Yes.

1548 Mr. Curry. If you don't mind, if I could just add to that?

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1549 Mrs. Brooks. Please.

1550 Mr. Curry. In Hunterdon County where I live, my post office  
1551 isn't even in my county so we have postal mailing addresses that  
1552 expand way beyond where you think you may live. In addition to  
1553 that about one-third of our county is covered by the state police  
1554 and that is three different state police barracks. People don't  
1555 know who their police agencies are, let alone know the number  
1556 to call for a non-emergency.

1557 So I know we have talked about, you know, the nationwide  
1558 scale, but for me it is more important on a local level.

1559 Mrs. Brooks. So it is even a local, not just the traveling  
1560 because I have been told if a person were driving we have no fewer  
1561 than 18 different abbreviated short codes across 29 states and  
1562 if a person were driving across Highway 95 they would even see  
1563 ten different dialing codes.

1564 Mr. Curry. Yes.

1565 Mrs. Brooks. And so it is impossible for just a citizen  
1566 to be driving even on our interstate system and know who to call  
1567 if they saw a tree down or a dead deer along the side of the road.

1568 I mean things that might not be a true emergency and yet the  
1569 9-1-1 operators and folks, dispatchers rather than I am speaking  
1570 with are very concerned about making sure they have the time and

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1571 the bandwidth to handle the true emergency calls because those  
1572 are the ones that really deserve their attention. Wouldn't you  
1573 agree?

1574 Mr. Curry. Yes.

1575 Mrs. Brooks. And do we have many situations documented of,  
1576 you know, people being on hold for 9-1-1 for quite some time when  
1577 they have true emergencies? Do we have that documented as well?

1578 Mr. Reyes. We don't document that in our jurisdiction.

1579 Mr. Starks. I don't have the data, but I know that it has  
1580 occurred within Montgomery County.

1581 Mrs. Brooks. And how about you, Mr. Curry?

1582 Mr. Curry. This past early spring, late winter we had two  
1583 storms come through, Quinn and Riley, and the way our 9-1-1 system  
1584 works is if it doesn't get answered in one PSAP it goes to the  
1585 next and it bounces. And during one particular storm we received  
1586 over 200 9-1-1 calls from the previous county and even a handful  
1587 of calls from two counties before that. A lot of those calls  
1588 were just that -- my power is out.

1589 Mrs. Brooks. Okay. And so therefore your dispatchers are  
1590 taking all those calls in, whereas if someone had a horrific wreck  
1591 or something during that storm they could have been on hold.

1592 Mr. Curry. Correct. And some of those were emergencies

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1593 that we were getting those redundant calls from.

1594 Mrs. Brooks. Okay, thank you. Appreciate it and yield  
1595 back.

1596 Mr. Lance. Thank you, Mrs. Brooks.

1597 Seeing there are no further members wishing to ask questions  
1598 for the panel, I thank our witnesses for being here today. Before  
1599 we conclude, I ask unanimous consent to enter the following  
1600 documents into the record: The letter from Hunterdon County  
1601 Freeholders in support of H.R. 6424; an article on 9-1-1 fee  
1602 diversion in New Jersey; and an article from the New York Times  
1603 offered by Mr. Doyle. Pursuant to committee rules, I remind  
1604 members that they have 10 business days to submit additional  
1605 questions for the record and I ask that witnesses submit their  
1606 responses within 10 business days upon receipt of the questions.

1607 Seeing no further business before the subcommittee today,  
1608 without objection, the subcommittee is adjourned.

1609 [Whereupon, at 12:04 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]