

February 27, 2020

The Honorable Mike Doyle
Chairman
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bob Latta
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications and
Technology
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2322-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Doyle and Pallone, Ranking Members Latta and Walden, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for holding this important hearing on “Strengthening Communications Networks to Help Americans In Crisis.” Having dedicated my career to public safety, I understand the critical importance of ensuring reliable communications systems during times of emergency.

As your committee examines the future of our nation’s emergency communications infrastructure, I encourage you to remember one network that has provided the public with lifeline information during times of crisis for decades – America’s local broadcasters.

During my career in emergency management – including eight years as the director of the Florida Emergency Management Division under Governor Jeb Bush and eight years as administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under President Barack Obama – I witnessed firsthand the important work broadcast radio and television stations do to keep local communities informed when disaster strikes.

Even as other communications networks fail or become congested during emergencies, broadcast radio and TV’s unique infrastructure allows local stations to serve the public with critical information when disaster strikes. Local radio and TV stations often provide round-the-clock news coverage during dangerous situations, offering block-by-block information to keep the public out of harm’s way. They partner with local public safety officials to keep Americans’ apprised of the situation on the ground and carry important emergency briefings live on-air.

I have benefitted personally from radio and TV broadcasters' role as 'first informers.' During Hurricane Irma in 2017 I lost power, taking with it my cable and Internet service. Local cellular networks were congested with traffic. Thankfully, I had a battery-operated radio that served as my only news source until the storm had passed. My experience is just one of countless others that highlight why all Americans should have a battery-operated television or hand-crank broadcast radio in their emergency supply kit.

Thank you again for your interest in strengthening communications infrastructure to keep every American safe during emergencies. I urge you and your colleagues to remember that when it comes to public safety in a lifeline situation, there is no substitute for the credible and reliable information that comes from local radio and TV broadcasters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'W. Craig Fugate', written in a cursive style.

W. Craig Fugate

FEMA Administrator 2009-2017

Director, Florida Division of Emergency Management 2001-2009