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6 STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

7 TO HELP AMERICANS IN CRISIS

8 THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2020

9 House of Representatives

10 Subcommittee on Communications and

11 Technology

12 Committee on Energy and Commerce

13 Washington, D.C.

14

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

20 Members present: Representatives Doyle, McNerney, Clarke,  
21 Loeb sack, Veasey, Soto, O'Halleran, Eshoo, Matsui, Schrader,  
22 Cardenas, Dingell, Pallone (ex officio), Olson, Kinzinger,  
23 Bilirakis, Johnson, Flores, Brooks, Walberg, Gianforte, and

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24 Walden (ex officio).

25 Also Present: Representative Engel.

26 Staff present: AJ Brown, Counsel; Parul Desai, FCC Detailee;  
27 Evan Gilbert, Press Assistant; Waverly Gordon, Deputy Chief  
28 Counsel; Alex Hoehn-Saric, Chief Counsel, C&T; Zach Kahan,  
29 Outreach and Member Service Coordinator; Jerry Leverich, Senior  
30 Counsel; Dan Miller, Junior Professional Staff Member; Phil  
31 Murphy, Policy Coordinator; Alivia Roberts, Press Assistant; Tim  
32 Robinson, Chief Counsel; Chloe Rodriguez, Policy Analyst; William  
33 Clutterbuck, Minority Staff Assistant; Michael Engel, Minority  
34 Detailee, C&T; Peter Kielty, Minority General Counsel; Kate  
35 O'Connor, Minority Chief Counsel, C&T; and Evan Viau, Minority  
36 Professional Staff Member, C&T.

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37 Mr. Doyle. The committee will now come to order.

38 The chair will now recognize himself 5 minutes for an opening  
39 statement. I want to thank our witnesses for appearing before  
40 us today to discuss a range of legislative proposals intended  
41 to address challenges facing the American people and those  
42 responsible for helping them in times of crisis. The bills before  
43 the subcommittee today include Chairman Pallone and Mr.  
44 McNerney's RESILIENT Networks Act; Ms. Eshoo's WIRED Act; the  
45 READI Act introduced by Mr. McNerney, Mr. Bilirakis, and Mr.  
46 Olson; Mr. Engel's Don't Break Up the T-Band Act; Ms. Matusi's  
47 and Ms. Eshoo's Emergency Reporting Act; Mr. Thompson's PHONE  
48 Act; Mr. Moulton and Mr. Stewart's National Suicide Hotline  
49 Designation Act; and Ranking Member Walden's FIRST RESPONDER Act.

50 [The Bills, Resolutions, and Amendments en bloc follow:]

51

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

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53           Mr. Doyle. In the last few years, resiliency has taken on  
54 a new meaning. Our Nation has faced a surge of extreme weather  
55 events from Super Storm Sandy in New Jersey and New York to severe  
56 hurricanes in Puerto Rico, the Gulf, and the southern eastern  
57 United States.

58           Puerto Rico, in particular, has been hit hard with multiple  
59 hurricanes. In this most recent earthquake, thousands of people  
60 lost their lives and they are still struggling to reconnect  
61 critical infrastructure. The Federal Government simply has not  
62 done enough. We must do better for the people there.

63           In California, people have seen their State ravaged by some  
64 of the first wildfires in history. These fires haven't just  
65 burned down homes, they have destroyed whole communities. In  
66 the Midwest, communities have experienced record flooding and  
67 crop losses.

68           More and more exception weather events that used to occur  
69 once in a generation are becoming a regular occurrence.  
70 Human-caused climate change is driving the shift in our weather  
71 patterns and, while we work to combat even worse effects in the  
72 future, we need to deal with this new normal now.

73           Our Nation's communications infrastructure is a lifeline  
74 to those facing exigent circumstances and it needs to be ready  
75 to take on the challenges we know it will face, whether that be

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76 fires, floods, Category 5 winds, or 9-1-1 call centers outages,  
77 a public safety emergency in a major city, or a personal crisis  
78 that could cost someone their life. In each case, communication  
79 networks that are ready and resilient to the challenges we know  
80 they will face can be the difference between life and death.

81 It is my hope that, as we examine legislation before us today,  
82 we can come together and find common ground because, while each  
83 of our districts has some unique challenges, we can all  
84 acknowledge that our communities are safer and stronger when folks  
85 can communicate with each other and access the resources they  
86 need in an emergency.

87 With that, I would like to yield a minute to my good friend  
88 Mr. McNerney. And then after his minute, a minute to Ms. Eshoo.

89 Mr. McNerney. Well I thank the chairman for holding this  
90 hearing and for yielding a minute to me.

91 This year, we are witnessing the driest February on record  
92 in much of Northern California, which is where my district is  
93 located. As experts warn about the possibility of early and more  
94 intense wildfire season, it is imperative that we help individuals  
95 stay connected during these natural disasters.

96 This situation is, in part, why I have introduced H.R. 5926,  
97 the RESILIENT Networks Act with Chairman Pallone. This  
98 legislation would make critical improvements to the reliability

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99 of our communications network.

100 I have also introduced H.R. 4856, the READI Act, with my  
101 colleagues, Mr. Bilirakis and Mr. Olson. This legislation would  
102 help ensure that we have a robust wireless emergency alerting  
103 system.

104 Additionally, I have asked the chairman of the FCC to hold  
105 a hearing in Northern California to examine the cell tower outages  
106 that occurred during the recent wildfires. Chairman Pai  
107 committed to me that he would hold this hearing. I look forward  
108 to hearing from him about the details of when and where it will  
109 be held.

110 And now I yield to my colleague, Ms. Eshoo.

111 Ms. Eshoo. I thank the gentleman and I thank you, Chairman  
112 Doyle, for not only yielding time but for also holding this very  
113 important meeting.

114 On October 28th of last year, 874 cell towers were out in  
115 California, caused by wildfires and power shut-offs. My  
116 constituents were worried sick that they wouldn't be able to call  
117 911 during emergencies, receive emergency alerts, or download  
118 public safety information. Our wildfires are getting more  
119 intense because of climate change and PG&E, the major utility,  
120 estimates that shut-offs will impact nearly two million  
121 Californians this year.

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122           So without real changes, I really worry that our telecom  
123 problem will, once again, worsen the impacts of these disasters  
124 and it is why I have introduced the WIRED Act, which clarifies  
125 that States can require carriers to take measures to make wireless  
126 infrastructure more resilient to disasters, such as requiring  
127 backup power. We have to have this and the ambiguities in the  
128 law today are cleared away by this legislation.

129           I am grateful that we are also considering Congresswoman  
130 Matsui's bill, which I am proud to be an original co-sponsor of.

131

132           And I look forward to a very productive hearing. I thank  
133 all the witnesses.

134           And Mr. Chairman, thank you for grouping these bills and  
135 having the hearing so that they can move on. These bills,  
136 collectively, are going to make a real difference in the lives  
137 of Californians and others across the country.

138           And I yield back.

139           Mr. Doyle. I thank the gentlelady.

140           The chair now recognizes Mr. Latta, the ranking member for  
141 the subcommittee, for his opening statement.

142           Mr. Latta. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I really  
143 appreciate you holding today's hearing. And good morning and  
144 welcome to today's hearing to discuss a variety of public

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145 safety-related legislation.

146 I also want to thank our witnesses for sharing their  
147 experiences with us on dealing with the day-to-day challenges  
148 associated with the concepts of these legislative proposals.  
149 So thanks again for being here.

150 Public safety communications provide an important lifeline  
151 to consumers and, as we make advances in technology, we must be  
152 careful to make sure transitions are done thoughtfully, are  
153 transparent, and have public input.

154 While many of the bills before us have good intentions to  
155 improve the resiliency of our emergency communications systems,  
156 we must ensure that these bills receive proper attention so their  
157 goals are achieved.

158 First, the subcommittee is examining H.R. 1289, the PHONE  
159 Act, which will provide a moratorium on number reassignment after  
160 a natural disaster. I believe we can all agree that consumers  
161 should lose their phone number after their home is destroyed from  
162 a fire or a hurricane but remedy we use to protect consumers must  
163 be manageable for companies that provide voice service to tens  
164 of millions of consumers. Without taking that into account, we  
165 could cause more confusion for Americans already reeling from  
166 disasters.

167 If there a concern with the Commission's current process



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168 for obtaining a waiver of the Aging Rule, that is something we  
169 should study.

170 I believe that these and other challenges can be overcome  
171 and I am committed to working with my friends in the majority  
172 to see if there is a path forward. However, I caution you against  
173 moving such important legislation without due consideration under  
174 regular order.

175 I am pleased that we are considering the FIRST RESPONDER  
176 Act, which repeals the T-Band auction mandate, while addressing  
177 the issue of 911 fee diversion by States, as well as my colleague  
178 from New York's bill, Don't Break Up the T-Band Act. These bills  
179 address critical bipartisan issues that, if not addressed, put  
180 the entire 911 and public safety system at risk.

181 We will also discuss H.R. 4194, the National Suicide Hotline  
182 Designation Act. Last Congress, this committee unanimously  
183 passed the National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, which tasked  
184 the FCC with studying whether to designate an n-1-1 three-digit  
185 short code for a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. Chairman  
186 Pai has announced his intention to move forward on designating  
187 9-8-8 and I applaud this decision.

188 And I was pleased to host the chairman recently in Toledo,  
189 Ohio at a visit of the Rescue, Mental Health, and Addiction  
190 Services, a National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Crisis Center.

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191 At the Center, we learned the number of hotline calls that needed  
192 answering in Ohio increased by 70 percent from 2016 to 2018.  
193 With suicide rates growing at an alarming rate across our Nation,  
194 we need to make sure that the prevention services are there and  
195 they have never been needed more than they are needed today.

196 We must ensure resources like 9-8-8 are available for at-risk  
197 Americans to get the help they need.

198 And Mr. Chairman, with that, I appreciate you holding today's  
199 hearing and thank our witnesses for being here to testify today.

200 And I will yield back the balance of my time.

201 Mr. Doyle. I thank the gentleman.

202 The chair now recognizes Mr. Pallone, chairman of the full  
203 committee for 5 minutes for his opening statement.

204 The Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

205 Today, the subcommittee is considering a number of important  
206 bills to improve communication networks, particularly in times  
207 of emergency. The fact is that climate change is causing more  
208 frequent and more severe disasters; and a functioning  
209 communications network can be the difference between life and  
210 death in these situations. And we have a responsibility to ensure  
211 our networks are prepared for this stark reality.

212 One of the bills we are considering today is the RESILIENT  
213 Networks Act, which I introduced with Representative McNerney.

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214 This legislation picks up where the SANDy Act left off and will  
215 ensure that communication networks are prepared for the worst  
216 when disaster strikes.

217 When networks go down, it is critical that providers share  
218 information about outages and restoration efforts with 9-1-1 Call  
219 Centers and first responders. They need access to outage reports  
220 to better keep us safe.

221 And I want to thank the Association of Public Safety  
222 Communications officials for letting us know about the need to  
223 address this issue. And I would like to request unanimous consent  
224 to enter a letter from APCO into the record, Mr. Chairman.

225 Mr. Doyle. Without objection, so ordered.

226 [The information follows:]

227

228 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

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229 The Chairman. Thank you.

230 So the bill the RESILIENT Networks Act also makes certain  
231 that providers have pre-planned roaming agreements and mutual  
232 aid agreements in place ahead of time. This coordination can  
233 mean the difference between life and death. When a storm or  
234 wildfire strikes, it is essential that people can still make calls  
235 to 9-1-1 or to loved ones. Service is also critical to receiving  
236 emergency alerts that providing life-saving information.

237 In an instance where one carrier's network is working and  
238 another goes down, having a plan in place beforehand to seamlessly  
239 transition subscribers onto the working network is common sense  
240 and can save lives.

241 Perhaps the most frustrating challenge of all is outages  
242 that happen during the recovery phase, after storms or disasters  
243 have passed. Far too many networks go down due to accidental  
244 cuts into the networks when restoration efforts are well underway.

245 And our bill directs the FCC to examine ways to stop these  
246 preventable outages and I look forward to seeing the result of  
247 their analysis.

248 I am also pleased that the National Suicide Hotline  
249 Designation Act is listed for consideration today and thank  
250 Representative Stewart Moulton and Eddie Bernice Johnson for  
251 their leadership on this issue. Every day the National Suicide

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252 Prevention Lifeline saves lives. And reports from the Substance  
253 Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, and the FCC, say  
254 that making 9-8-8 the dialing code for the Lifeline will save  
255 more lives. This bill will make it easier for people experiencing  
256 a mental health crisis to access help.

257 In my State of New Jersey, a hundred young people aged 15  
258 to 24 died by suicide in 2017, the highest number and rate since  
259 the 1990s. Tragically, rates are climbing across the board at  
260 the national level, too. The statistics are particularly  
261 alarming for LGBTQ youth, who are four times more likely to attempt  
262 suicide than their peers.

263 According to the Trevor Project's National Survey, 30  
264 percent of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide  
265 in the past year, including more than half of transgender or  
266 nonbinary youth, and it is vital that we do all we can to turn  
267 these trends.

268 And finally, I wanted to thank our Ranking Member Walden  
269 and Representatives Engle, Eshoo, McNerney, Matsui, and Thompson  
270 for their important work on other bills being considered today.

271 And I wanted to yield the remainder of my time to  
272 Representative Matsui, Mr. Chairman.

273 Ms. Matsui. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for yielding  
274 and Chairman Doyle for holding this important timely hearing.

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275           The natural disasters we will examine at today's hearing  
276           were, just a few years ago, irregularities, unavoidable but  
277           uncommon events. Today, these once-in-a-generation storms and  
278           fires have become all too common occurrence.

279           In 2019 alone, wildfires in California damaged or destroyed  
280           732 structures and burned almost 260,000 acres. Worst of all,  
281           three lives were lost. As destructive as these fires were, we  
282           know that they are not an anomaly. Wildfire season is getting  
283           longer. Wildfire incidents are becoming more common and their  
284           intensity is increasing.

285           In the face of this evolving threat, we must adapt -- adopt  
286           a holistic approach, one that addresses environmental, economic,  
287           and human factors that contribute to our changing climate.

288           Additionally, as we will discuss at this hearing, we need  
289           to take immediate steps to ensure our networks can perform as  
290           intended during emergencies. The shortcomings are network  
291           performance were laid bare by Hurricane Maria, the Thomas Fire,  
292           and Superstorm Sandy. This committee has an obligation to move  
293           quickly and collaboratively to advance legislation that will help  
294           prepare our country for the natural disasters of tomorrow. That  
295           is why I worked with my colleagues, Representative Eshoo,  
296           Thompson, and Huffman to introduce the Emergency Reporting Act.  
297           This bill would establish a standardized emergency reporting

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298 process at the FCC and improve standards that require mobile  
299 carriers to report network messages to 9-1-1 Centers.

300 The FCC needs to do a better job in response to crises.  
301 My bill will ensure that the FCC conducts field hearings, issues  
302 reports, and makes policy recommendations on all major disasters,  
303 regardless of their location so no community would again be left  
304 wondering: What can we do to better prepare for the next one?

305 It would also improve the flow of information to 9-1-1  
306 Centers when there are network outages in their service territory  
307 that prevent consumers from completing 9-1-1 calls or when the  
308 emergency calls do not include vital information like location  
309 or number data.

310 While existing outage reporting requirements exist at the  
311 FCC, the notification threshold is high and can lead to situations  
312 in which 9-1-1 Centers are left in the dark by service outages  
313 in their territory, jeopardizing public safety.

314 With that, I yield back.

315 Mr. Doyle. The gentlelady yields back.

316 The chair now recognizes Mr. Walden, ranking member of the  
317 full committee for his opening statement.

318 Mr. Walden. Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

319 Mr. Doyle. Good morning.

320 Mr. Walden. And I want to welcome our witnesses and guests

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321 today.

322 I just want to say on these wildfires, we have been facing  
323 this in the northwest for a long time. I was just looking it  
324 up. In 1910 was the giant fire in Idaho that burned I think  
325 something like three million acres and took 86 lives, mostly  
326 firefighters on the front lines.

327 So this is something some of us have been dealing with for  
328 a long time. Yes, it is getting worse. Yes, climate change is  
329 impacting it. But we have got to do work to get our forest back  
330 in balance and get the excess fuel loads out and we need your  
331 help to do that on both sides of aisle. We have got legislation  
332 to do that in the Resilient Forests Act. And then we need to  
333 replant. And we have a Trillion Trees project that I think can  
334 make a real difference for the ecology, and trees for our lungs,  
335 and the world's lungs, and can take and return oxygen to the  
336 environment. We need to do that, too.

337 And we need to make our networks resilient. I was in the  
338 radio business for 20 years. I have covered a lot of fires.  
339 I have worked closely with emergency personnel. I have been on  
340 the scenes of fires and accidents. And I have been out making  
341 my own generator work at my radio station when it would go out.

342 I have turned tower lights on in the middle of the day so rescue  
343 helicopters in fog could land at the nearby hospital. This is



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344 really important work but we have to get it right and that is  
345 why we look forward to working with you on the RESILIENT Act but  
346 we need to get it right.

347 You know the RESILIENT Networks Act put forth by the  
348 chairman, I appreciate his work on it. I know it has been a focus  
349 of his and others for a long time, especially since Superstorm  
350 Sandy.

351 Now we did include his SANDY Act and the RAY BAUM'S Act in  
352 the last Congress, when I chaired the committee. This addressed  
353 the complicated issues we examined and we did it in a bipartisan  
354 and timely way.

355 The RESILIENT Networks Act attempts to address concerns  
356 related to making sure wireless networks are restored in a timely  
357 and efficient manner during times of emergency but this bill has  
358 not seen -- been through the kind of examination I think, Mr.  
359 Chairman, it really deserves and needs. It is a very important  
360 topic and we have got to get it right.

361 I commend the chairman for taking initial steps to examine  
362 these issues in depth. In October of 2019, Chairman Pallone  
363 requested a GAO study to investigate and evaluate the failures  
364 in response to restoring communications in Puerto Rico after the  
365 devastating hurricane to see what happened during that crisis  
366 and what can be improved. Without objection, I would like to

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367 offer his letter for the record, Mr. Chairman. We have not yet

368 seen the results of this --

369 Mr. Doyle. So ordered.

370 [The information follows:]

371

372 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

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373           Mr. Walden. Thank you -- the study which may inform how  
374 Congress could address the issues contemplated in the RESILIENT  
375 Networks Act. So we should -- we asked for the information so  
376 we could learn what to get right and I wish we would wait to act  
377 until we get that.

378           The FCC is also taking steps to address these issues. In  
379 fact, the Commission is voting tomorrow on an item to provide  
380 State and Federal agencies with access to outage data. In many  
381 cases, having access to wireless communications during a natural  
382 disaster can save lives. So Mr. Chairman, it is important that  
383 we get this policy right.

384           As we will hear today, the wireless industry has made some  
385 great strides, over the last several years, to expand their  
386 Wireless Resiliency Cooperative Framework, which is a voluntary  
387 process to enhance coordination in times of an emergency. This  
388 Framework must remain flexible so we can allow best practices  
389 and lessons learned to evolve without creating unnecessary  
390 barriers to restoration. Every disaster is different. I have  
391 seen that firsthand. So communications providers and their  
392 partners need sufficient flexibility to adapt to specific  
393 situations.

394           States are also at the forefront in a lot of this work, as  
395 we have seen with wildfires out west in Oregon or the tragic ones

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396 in California. As you know, State regulators have jurisdiction  
397 over electric distribution. We must be mindful of how they are  
398 addressing this issue so we do not disrupt those efforts with  
399 heavy federal regulations and we must also be mindful to not extend  
400 the Federal Communications Commission's jurisdiction to include  
401 the electric distribution or transmission system, where they have  
402 no relevant expertise. But we cannot talk about the importance  
403 of the resiliency of the 9-1-1 system, while turning a blind eye  
404 to the flagrant and obvious attempts to undermine the system's  
405 integrity and, dare I say, resiliency.

406 That is why I am also pleased to discuss the FIRST RESPONDER  
407 Act today. Over the last several years, I have sought to find  
408 a consensus solution to the T-Band auction mandate that was  
409 included in the 2012 Spectrum Act and address related issues,  
410 including the efficient use of public safety spectrum and  
411 diversion of 9-1-1 fees.

412 The FIRST RESPONDER Act would repeal the T-Band auction  
413 mandate and include strong provisions to address the shameful  
414 acts by some States of diverting 9-1-1 fees intended for the  
415 maintenance and upgrade to Next Generation 9-1-1. While some  
416 States may not have clear understanding of what is a 9-1-1  
417 expenditure, other State politicians have made a more conscious  
418 decision to diver 9-1-1 fees to spend the money on pet projects

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419 unrelated to public policy.

420           So the FIRST RESPONDER Act addresses both concerns and give  
421 well-intentioned States clarity on how to prevent 9-1-1 fee  
422 diversion in the future but also would take steps to investigate  
423 whether criminal penalties or other tools could end the shameful  
424 practice of fee diversion by the worst offenders.

425           So with that, Mr. Chairman, I will just conclude by saying  
426 we should also keep in mind the role of ham radio operators.  
427 I may be one of the few in the Congress. It is actually an amateur  
428 radio operators but I have seen them play a key role in emergency  
429 situations, too, when everything else fails.

430           So with that, I yield back.

431           Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

432           The chair would like to remind members that, pursuant to  
433 committee rules, all members' written opening statements shall  
434 be made part of the record.

435           So I would now like to introduce our witnesses for today's  
436 hearing: Ms. Sue Ann Atkerson, CEO of Behavioral Health Link;  
437 Mr. Daniel Henry, Regulatory Counsel and director of Government  
438 Affairs, National Emergency Number Association; Mr. Allen Bell,  
439 Distribution Manager, Georgia Power Company; Mr. Anthony Gossner,  
440 Fire Chief, City of Santa Rosa, California; Mr. Matthew Gerst,  
441 Vice President, Regulatory Affairs for CTIA; and last but not

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442 least, Mr. Joseph Torres, Senior Director of Strategy and  
443 Engagement, Free Press and Free Press Action.

444 We want to thank all of our witnesses for joining us today.  
445 We look forward to your testimony.

446 At this time, the chair will recognize each witness for 5  
447 minutes to provide their opening statements but, before we begin,  
448 I would like to explain the lighting system. In front of you  
449 is a series of lights. The light will initially be green. The  
450 light will turn yellow when you have 1 minute remaining. Please  
451 wrap up your testimony at that point. The light will turn red  
452 when your time has expired and, if you keep talking, a trap door  
453 will open under your seat and whisk you away.

454 So with that admonishment, Ms. Atkerson, you are recognized  
455 for 5 minutes.

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456 STATEMENTS OF SUE ANN ATKERSON, CEO, BEHAVIORAL HEALTH LINK;  
457 DANIEL HENRY, REGULATORY COUNSEL AND DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT  
458 AFFAIRS, NATIONAL EMERGENCY NUMBER ASSOCIATION; ALLEN BELL,  
459 DISTRIBUTION MANAGER, GEORGIA POWER COMPANY; ANTHONY GOSSNER,  
460 FIRE CHIEF, CITY OF SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA; MATTHEW GERST, VICE  
461 PRESIDENT, REGULATORY AFFAIRS, CTIA; AND JOSEPH TORRES, SENIOR  
462 DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND ENGAGEMENT, FREE PRESS AND FREE PRESS  
463 ACTION

464

465 STATEMENT OF SUE ANN ATKERSON

466 Ms. Atkerson. Thank you and good morning, Chairman.

467 Mr. Doyle. Can you pull your microphone up closer to you,  
468 please? Yes.

469 Ms. Atkerson. Sure. Thank you. Good morning, Chairman  
470 Doyle, Ranking Member Latta, and members of the committee. Thank  
471 you for inviting me today and for your leadership in strengthening  
472 the country's suicide prevention and crisis care services.

473 By designating 9-8-8 as the dialing code for suicide  
474 prevention services, the bipartisan National Suicide Hotline  
475 Designation Act, H.R. 4194 is a historic step toward saving more  
476 American lives and I should know. My name is Sue Ann Atkerson  
477 and I have spent more than 25 years working to prevent suicide.

478 I am the CEO of Behavioral Health Link in Atlanta, Georgia and

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479 COO for RI International based in Phoenix, Arizona. BHL provides  
480 a 24/7 community-based call center hub and mobile outreach and  
481 RI International offers facility-based crisis services in eight  
482 States. Working together, these programs deliver a full  
483 continuum of best practice crisis service care.

484 I have three points to share today: one, suicide is a  
485 leading cause of death in the United States; two, faster access  
486 to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline will save lives; and  
487 three, funding and specialized services are essential for  
488 success.

489 Before I go into detail on these, I want to share a story  
490 that illustrates why we are all here today: Misha Kessler. The  
491 9-8-8 code is precisely what Misha Kessler, a now mental health  
492 advocate from Ohio, needed when he experienced suicidal ideation  
493 as a sophomore at George Washington University. During a  
494 particularly difficult time, he planned to jump out of his  
495 sixth-floor dorm window to his death. Without other options,  
496 Misha ended up in an inpatient psychiatric hospitalization.

497 Misha's experience would likely have been different, had  
498 9-8-8 existed. His 9-8-8 call would have been redirected to the  
499 Lifeline, where local call centers deescalate 98 percent of calls,  
500 getting people the help they need immediately.

501 The sooner we can intervene to help a person in crisis, the



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502 more lives we can save. That is why the 9-8-8 dial code and a  
503 fully-funded Lifeline is so important.

504 I will begin with some background on the suicide epidemic.  
505 Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death of Americans overall  
506 and the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 34.  
507 We lost nearly 50,000 Americans to suicide in 2018. Of  
508 particular relevance to the chair and ranking member,  
509 Pennsylvania ranked fourth in the Nation for suicide deaths and  
510 Ohio ranked fifth.

511 Some populations are particularly vulnerable to suicide.  
512 LGBTQ youth, for example, are four times more likely than their  
513 heterosexual peers to contemplate suicide and the incidence rates  
514 for transgender youth have skyrocketed in recent years.

515 Secondly, faster access to the Lifeline will save lives.  
516 Research shows that the time between a person deciding to act  
517 and attempting suicide can be as short as 5 to 10 minutes. That  
518 means there is a critical period for intervention similar to the  
519 so-called golden hour of a stroke, meaning that time is of the  
520 essence.

521 Fifty-three years ago, the FCC established 9-1-1,  
522 transforming emergency care in this country by making access to  
523 trained medical professionals available to anyone, anywhere,  
524 anytime. Today, Americans in mental health distress often turn

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525 to our medical system. Landing in overcrowded emergency rooms  
526 that are often ill-equipped to address psychiatric needs can lead  
527 to delays in accessing appropriate care. When they do get  
528 treatment, it comes at a very high cost, not only to the patient  
529 but also to taxpayers, in the form of emergency medical services  
530 and law enforcement resources.

531 Adopting 9-8-8 will allow direct immediate access to trained  
532 mental health professionals, whose rapid intervention often  
533 results in lifesaving actions.

534 Lastly, funding and specialized services are essential to  
535 success. The Lifeline network of accredited crisis centers must  
536 be fully funded and well-equipped to handle specialized needs  
537 of callers as call volume increases. Estimates indicate the  
538 potential for calls to double in the first year, reaching upwards  
539 of five million.

540 Full funding of the Lifeline is critical to success and we  
541 will, undoubtedly, need a braided funding approach. This  
542 includes giving States the authority to levy fees, such as a  
543 service charge revenue through wireless carriers. We also need  
544 to strengthen partnerships between the Lifeline and specialty  
545 suicide prevention resources. In fact, the Senate companion bill  
546 2661 directs SAMHSA to create an implementation plan for  
547 specialized services for LGBTQ youth and other at-risk

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548 populations, which could include training crisis counselors and  
549 integrated voice response to route calls to specialized  
550 organizations. We encourage the House of Representatives to  
551 adopt this language.

552 In conclusion, it is the consensus of the mental health  
553 community, including the operators of the Lifeline, that Congress  
554 should pass H.R. 4194. Providing faster access to a fully-funded  
555 Lifeline network, with specialized services for our most at-risk  
556 populations, will save American lives.

557 Thank you.

558 [The prepared statement of Ms. Atkerson follows:]

559

560 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 2\*\*\*\*\*

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561 Mr. Doyle. Thank you very much.

562 Mr. Henry, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

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563 STATEMENT OF DANIEL HENRY

564

565 Mr. Henry. Chairman Pallone, Chairman Doyle, Ranking  
566 Member Walden, Ranking Member Latta, and members of the committee,  
567 thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

568 My name is Daniel Henry. I am Regulatory Counsel and  
569 Director of Government Affairs for NENA, The 9-1-1 Association.

570 With over 16,000 members across the United States, NENA is the  
571 leading professional association in the 9-1-1 space.

572 Thanks also to the members of the Congressional NextGen 9-1-1  
573 Caucus, including co-chairs Representatives Eshoo and Shimkus,  
574 as well as many other members of this committee, including  
575 Chairman Pallone and Chairman Doyle. We appreciate your support.

576 Built in the days of copper landline trunks, 9-1-1 now  
577 answers around 80 percent of its 300 million annual calls from  
578 mobile phones, most of them smartphones with advanced location  
579 and data-sharing capabilities. Unfortunately, America's 9-1-1  
580 system is still years behind the smartphone revolution.

581 Modernizing it faces four perennial challenges: decentralized  
582 governance, inadequate and inconsistent funding, human resources  
583 challenges, and evolving technology.

584 Public Safety Answering Points or PSAPs vary widely from  
585 community to community, as noted. Each of these settings has

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586 its own unique needs, conventions, technology, and funding  
587 models. It would be impossible to impose a single cookie cutter  
588 model for 9-1-1 in every jurisdiction in the United States.

589 With varied governance comes varied funding means. While  
590 9-1-1 fees are traditionally levied as line items on subscriber  
591 phone bills, funding models also vary. In some cases, they are  
592 uniform statewide fees. In others, counties levy the fees.  
593 Regardless of how the money is collected, adequate funding streams  
594 are required for both technology upgrades and for daily operations  
595 of 9-1-1.

596 What constitutes an allowable 9-1-1 expenditure also varies  
597 from one State to the next. While one State may define anything  
598 within the walls of the PSAP as 9-1-1 spending, another may extend  
599 that definition to all kinds of public safety equipment.

600 More challenging still is some States' practice of diverting  
601 funds collected through 9-1-1 fees to unrelated issues.

602 According to data collected by the FCC, in 2018 alone, five States  
603 diverted a total of \$187 million in consumer-paid 9-1-1 fees.

604 Most people would agree that, when we pay a 9-1-1 fee, that money  
605 should go to 9-1-1. Raids on 9-1-1 funds must cease, both to  
606 maintain today's level of service and to accelerate the transition  
607 to Next Generation 9-1-1.

608 Our 9-1-1 system also plays a critical role during disasters

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609 as a primary intake of information to public safety. During  
610 Hurricane Harvey, for instance, Houston 9-1-1 processed 75,000  
611 calls during the course of a single weekend, more than four and  
612 a half times its normal call volume. In the aggregate, these  
613 calls become crowd-sourced intelligence for public safety  
614 providing thousands of details in real time and helping  
615 authorities stay safe and do their jobs.

616 The 9-1-1 system also serves as an early warning system for  
617 "blue-sky" outages, as was the case in December 2018 when a major  
618 nationwide outage was brought to light only by sharply dropping  
619 9-1-1 call volumes. Threats to connectivity are exacerbated in  
620 this legacy 9-1-1 environment, where specialized 9-1-1 trunks  
621 and selective routers create single points of failure in the  
622 network. It is, thus, imperative that these facilities be  
623 supported by more reliable frequently tested sources of backup  
624 power and connectivity.

625 It is also crucial that telecommunications providers and  
626 9-1-1 work hand-in-hand to tackle outage reporting and analysis,  
627 so that they may work together to address current outages and  
628 prevent future ones.

629 Many of these challenges will be alleviated by the transition  
630 to Next Generation 9-1-1, whereas legacy 9-1-1 is based on  
631 voice-only 20th century technology. NG is a standards-based

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632 IP-powered system of systems that brings 9-1-1 into the 21st  
633 century. To enhance resiliency, NG 9-1-1 will allow for seamless  
634 rollover of operations when PSAPs experience an outage or are  
635 overwhelmed with calls. It will allow PSAPs to connect to 9-1-1  
636 networks through multiple cost-effect pathways and it will make  
637 our 9-1-1 systems more secure and more resilient against  
638 cyberattacks. Finally, it will allow for faster upgrades and  
639 solutions to problems and innovations as they arise in the  
640 marketplace.

641 The fiscal burden of this transition cannot be borne solely  
642 by States and localities alone. The National 9-1-1 Office  
643 estimates the NG transition will cost around \$12 billion  
644 nationwide, above and beyond the day-to-day operating costs of  
645 our current 9-1-1 systems. Industry and public safety have  
646 worked together for over a decade to develop the technical and  
647 operational standards, governance models, and best practices for  
648 Next Generation 9-1-1. It has been tested in numerous real-world  
649 environments. In short, 9-1-1 is ready for this transition.

650 We are deeply grateful, Mr. Chairman, that you and your  
651 committee have called this hearing to consider several pieces  
652 of legislation to improve America's 9-1-1 systems. We believe  
653 that significant improvements can be made soon in practically  
654 every community's 9-1-1 systems and that Congress' investment



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655 will deliver priceless returns.

656 We at NENA look forward to working with you and with all  
657 stakeholders to assure the continued success of 9-1-1 and an  
658 accelerated transition to NG9-1-1.

659 Thank you.

660 [The prepared statement of Mr. Henry follows:]

661

662 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 3\*\*\*\*\*

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663 Mr. Doyle. Thank you.

664 Mr. Bell, you are now recognized for 5 minutes.

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665 STATEMENT OF ALLEN BELL

666

667 Mr. Bell. Chairman Pallone, Chairman Doyle, Ranking Member  
668 Walden, Ranking Member Latta, and members of the subcommittee,  
669 thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning.

670 My name is Allen Bell and I serves as a Distribution Support  
671 Manager for Georgia Power. I am also a member of the FCC's  
672 Broadband Deployment Advisory Committee and serve on its Disaster  
673 Response and Recovery Working Group. I have nearly 3 decades  
674 of experience working disaster response and recovery, and  
675 communications issues in the electric power industry, including  
676 serving 15 years on Georgia's 8-1-1 Board.

677 Georgia Power is the largest subsidiary of Southern Company,  
678 one of the nation's largest generators of electricity. We serve  
679 9 million customers in six States and our communications service  
680 provider, Southern Linc, operates over a 127,000 square mile  
681 territory covering Georgia, Alabama, southeastern Mississippi,  
682 and the Panhandle of Florida.

683 The electric power industry invests more than \$110 billion  
684 a year to modernize the grid. Georgia Power just had more than  
685 a billion dollars in grid investment approved by the Georgia  
686 Public Service Commission.

687 I appreciate Chairman Pallone and Congressman McNerney's

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688 leadership by introducing the RESILIENT Networks Act. This is  
689 a serious issue that is currently being addressed by a number  
690 of voluntary cross-sector efforts. While these efforts should  
691 be given the opportunity to be seen through before congressional  
692 action, I applaud several of the bill's provisions.

693 In particular, DOE should be included in recommending best  
694 practices for coordination between the two sectors because there  
695 are only two electric utility representatives on the BDAC.  
696 Communication providers should take responsible measures to  
697 integrate backup power into their networks and Emergency  
698 Operation Centers already exist to provide appropriate  
699 coordination during times of emergency between industry and  
700 Government stakeholders. Among the voluntary efforts the BDAC  
701 Disaster Response and Recovery Working Group is in the process  
702 of finalizing a report that will identify best practices for  
703 coordination before, during, and after a disaster.

704 Additionally, at the request of the FCC, the Edison Electric  
705 Institute and the CTIA are establishing a Cross-Sector Resiliency  
706 Forum.

707 With respect to H.R. 5926 it is crucial to acknowledge that  
708 most disasters are local, State, or regional events. Therefore,  
709 the goal should be to drive all coordination and  
710 information-sharing through State or county EOCs. The

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711 unintended consequence of a Federal master directory is that it  
712 could have the opposite effect.

713 Another concern with H.R. 5926 is the consideration of  
714 applying the one-call notification system to fiber lines at the  
715 Federal level. Rather than duplicate efforts that are already  
716 in place in most states, I would recommend assigning fiber optic  
717 locators to electric and debris removal crews during storm  
718 restoration and evaluating construction practices for critical  
719 communication networks to ensure fiber lines are not laid adjacent  
720 to electric poles.

721 Southern's extensive experience with powerful storms, such  
722 as Hurricane Michael, demonstrate that hardening, redundancy,  
723 and preparedness are keys to improving resiliency. Our primary  
724 focus is a safe and quick restoration of power. For some electric  
725 customers, including nursing homes and hospitals, electric  
726 service restoration and be a matter of life and death. Even while  
727 undertaking these restoration efforts, we still coordinated  
728 regularly with communications providers at the EOCs. All  
729 critical infrastructure providers have a responsibility to use  
730 these existing multi-stakeholder processes to improve the  
731 resiliency of their systems.

732 One reason for Southern Linc's ability to maintain and  
733 quickly restore operational cell sites is our use of generations

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734 and fuel cells. While having an onsite generator at every site  
735 may not be feasible, wireless carriers should consider having  
736 generators at their most critical sites.

737 Another key factor is Southern Linc's use of redundant  
738 backhaul and transport links for its site. Another key: During  
739 and immediately after large-scale storm or disaster damage to  
740 communications fiber is inevitable and should be planned for in  
741 advance.

742 In conclusion, we are committed to working with all  
743 stakeholders to strengthen infrastructure resilience and to  
744 promote safe, effective disaster response and service  
745 restoration.

746 [The prepared statement of Mr. Bell follows:]

747

748 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 4\*\*\*\*\*

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749 Mr. Doyle. Thank you, Mr. Bell.

750 Mr. Gossner, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

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751 STATEMENT OF ANTHONY GOSSNER

752

753 Mr. Gossner. Good morning, Chairman Doyle, Ranking Member  
754 Latta, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Anthony  
755 Gossner. I am the Fire Chief for the City of Santa Rosa.

756 On behalf of Mayor Schwedhelm, Vice Mayor Flemming, and the  
757 entire City of Santa Rosa, I would like to express my appreciation  
758 for the opportunity to appear before this committee today to  
759 discuss the vital role wireless communications and technology  
760 play in public safety and emergency situations.

761 A little over 2 years ago, the City of Santa Rosa, the largest  
762 city in Sonoma County and the county seat, experienced what was  
763 then the worst wildfire in California's history. Beginning on  
764 the night of October 8th, 2017, multiple fires broke out through  
765 California's North Bay. In Sonoma County, what were initially  
766 five major fires merged into three -- the Tubbs, the Nuns, and  
767 the Pocket Fires, collectively known as the Sonoma Complex. IN  
768 the span of a few hours, life profoundly changed for tens of  
769 thousands of people in Santa Rosa and throughout Sonoma County.

770 A total of 24 people lost their lives to the fires in Sonoma  
771 County, an estimated 100,000 evacuated from their homes, and 43  
772 emergency shelters opened, serving close to 4,162 people at the  
773 peak of the operations in Sonoma County.



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774           Property losses were estimated at \$13 billion. More than  
775           3,000 homes, approximately five percent of the city's housing  
776           stock, were destroyed, compounding an already severe housing  
777           deficit in the county. And for many fire survivors in our  
778           community, after losing their homes and personal possessions,  
779           lost their ability to communicate with family members, friends,  
780           doctors, and others because they lost their landline-associated  
781           phone numbers.

782           We thank Congressman Thompson for introducing the PHONE Act,  
783           which will provide a temporary hold on telephone number  
784           reassignments after a Federally-declared major disaster and  
785           ensure that disaster survivors going through the long and painful  
786           process of rebuilding, they will have one less thing to worry  
787           about.

788           The City of Santa Rosa strongly supports the PHONE Act and  
789           respectfully requests that this committee pass it quickly, making  
790           this critical need available to our communities this fire season  
791           and before another natural disaster strikes.

792           We know that telecommunications infrastructure is not only  
793           vital to our residents during and after recovery but it is also  
794           critical in how public safety officials respond to wildfires,  
795           hurricanes, tornados, and so many other disasters.

796           The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services

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797 reported that 341 cell sites were offline during the October 2017  
798 northern California wildfires and a combined 489 cell sites were  
799 offline during the Camp and Woolsey fires in November of 2018.

800 This prevented wireless users in the impacted areas from being  
801 able to call 9-1-1, receive an emergency alert, or use their cell  
802 phones to find the safest evacuation route.

803 Prior to and during the 2019 Kincadee fire in Sonoma County,  
804 PG&E deenergized major portions of northern California. In  
805 Sonoma County, one-quarter of the area's 436 cell phone towers  
806 were not functioning. And in nearby Marin County, more than half  
807 of the area's 280 towers were out of service due to this strategy.

808 While wireless infrastructure cannot stop a wildfire, it  
809 can and should be hardened to withstand these impacts of similar  
810 disasters. Therefore, the City strongly supports the Wireless  
811 Infrastructure Resiliency during Emergencies and Disaster Act,  
812 the WIRED Act. Sponsored by Congresswoman Eshoo and co-sponsored  
813 by Congressman Huffman, the bill gives the States the flexibility  
814 and authority to require wireless companies to deploy hardened  
815 infrastructure so that wireless networks are more resilient to  
816 disasters.

817 During the Tubbs fire, roughly 70 cell towers were knocked  
818 out of service within the first several hours of the fire due  
819 to damage, loss of power, or loss of terrestrial communications.

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820       Based on our experience, mandating reasonable requirements, like  
821       installation of fail-safe battery backup at cell towers,  
822       increasing the number of sites with backup generators, and  
823       sufficient fuel to operate for a maximum of 72 hours, requirements  
824       for reciprocity between cell providers so that, in the event of  
825       cell sites going offline during a disaster, sharing of cellular  
826       networks will hopefully be able to maintain at least a minimum  
827       level of emergency messaging and support, retrofitting existing  
828       cell tower sites, and enhanced vegetation management, and  
829       defensible space standards near cell towers could significantly  
830       improve our response capabilities.

831               In addition to hardening the telecommunications  
832       infrastructure, our alerting system plays a significant role in  
833       protecting people. Even as our recovery is still ongoing, the  
834       City has taken critical steps, including commissioning an  
835       After-Action Report to identify problems and implement solutions  
836       that will make the City more resilient in future disasters.

837               Our plan incorporate mitigation principles into future  
838       infrastructure projects and improves alerting systems available  
839       for public notifications, alert, warning, and advisories. The  
840       alerting systems now available to the City include IPAWS -- and  
841       I won't go into detail due to lack of time; SoCo Alert, which  
842       is an opt-in system; Hi/Lo Sirens, which are included on all of

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843 our police and fire apparatus; Nixle, which is an information  
844 service; and altering and outreach campaigns, which the City has  
845 created a robust system to disseminate throughout the City.

846 The City would also like to acknowledge the work FEMA is  
847 doing to update IPAWS to implement enhancements to the WEA System  
848 and has been working closely with the City of Santa Rosa and other  
849 local governments to deploy Next Generation of WEA technology,  
850 which will increase the maximum character from 90 to 360  
851 characters; and support Spanish Language wireless emergency  
852 alerts; add two new alert categories, in addition to the  
853 presidential, AMBER and Imminent Threat; and enhance  
854 geo-targeting reaching 100 percent of the target area with more  
855 than one-tenth of a mile overshoot and other improvements.

856 For these reasons and many others that I won't get into due  
857 to time, this is why we support the RESILIENT Networks Act. The  
858 City of Santa Rosa is working closely with the whole community,  
859 including Government and nonprofit private sector partners to  
860 ensure our residents, and first responders, emergency managers  
861 have the proper planning, equipment, and personnel to prevent  
862 and respond to the next disaster.

863 Again, thank you for providing me the opportunity to testify  
864 today and I look forward to answering any of your questions.  
865 Thank you.

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866 [The prepared statement of Mr. Gossner follows:]

867

868 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 5\*\*\*\*\*

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869 Mr. Doyle. Thank you.

870 Mr. Gerst, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

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871 STATEMENT OF MATTHEW GERST

872

873 Mr. Gerst. Chairman Pallone, Chairman Doyle, Ranking  
874 Member Walden, Ranking Member Latta, and members of the  
875 subcommittee, on behalf of CTIA and the wireless industry, thank  
876 you for holding this important hearing and your longstanding  
877 leadership of public safety issues.

878 Each member of this subcommittee has felt the impact of  
879 disaster. And in particular, I want to thank Chairman Pallone,  
880 who was instrumental in forging a framework in the aftermath of  
881 Superstorm Sandy. That framework has encouraged wireless  
882 providers to share resources and support each other's customers,  
883 all to maintain service and accelerate the recovery from recent  
884 disasters for millions of Americans.

885 Today, we are stronger than we were after Sandy and there  
886 is more we can do together to reinforce our networks, our  
887 responses, and our performance.

888 Americans are relying on wireless services more than ever.  
889 We reach for our wireless devices to call or text 9-1-1. We  
890 use mobile apps to organize rescues. And wireless emergency  
891 alerts ring the warning bells that spur us to action. That is  
892 why wireless providers prepare, respond, and invest in  
893 resiliency.

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894 Over the last decade, the wireless industry has invested  
895 \$253 billion to build redundant, diverse, and densified networks.  
896 So even if some cell sites go down, providers have fortified  
897 large-coverage cell sites to support critical communications.  
898 And providers enhance and restore wireless coverage with cell  
899 sites on the backs of trucks, that we call COWs, and dedicated  
900 teams ready to repair networks and heal communities with chargers  
901 and a helping hand.

902 These investments in resiliency have paid dividends.  
903 Ninety-five percent of cell sites maintained service throughout  
904 Hurricane Harvey. Eighty-one percent of cell sites withstood  
905 the intensity of Hurricane Michael. Ninety-six percent of cell  
906 sites were online while millions of Californians were without  
907 power last year. And just last month, sixty-eight percent of  
908 cell sites withstood a 6.4 magnitude earthquake that knocked out  
909 power across Puerto Rico.

910 Now these numbers do not diminish the challenges in the  
911 hardest hit areas. And wireless providers have applied lessons  
912 learned, like burying fiber to avoid damage during hurricane  
913 recovery efforts in Florida; hardening towers and cell sites to  
914 withstand high winds in Puerto Rico; elevating equipment to avoid  
915 flooding in Texas; and diversifying backup power solutions with  
916 cabinet-sized batteries and truck-sized generators in



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917 California.

918 The investments that wireless providers make in time,  
919 material, and people to prepare and respond to wildly diverse  
920 emergencies have made our networks and our Nation stronger but  
921 coordination and communication are also essential to rapidly  
922 respond and restore services. In light of recent experiences  
923 in Florida and California, wireless providers and electric  
924 utilities are taking steps to enhance coordination.

925 Today, I am pleased to announce that CTIA and the Edison  
926 Electric Institute recently agreed to convene our member  
927 companies to identifying near-term actions that can improve  
928 information sharing and preparedness. We will focus on lessons  
929 learned over the last year of hurricane and wildfire events and  
930 we will keep this subcommittee apprised of our progress.

931 Now even as our networks are getting stronger, storms and  
932 disaster events are too. This subcommittee is right to ask:  
933 What more can be done to enhance wireless services during  
934 emergencies? We support the goals of Chairman Pallone and  
935 Representative McNerney's RESILIENT Networks Act. By  
936 recognizing that wireless networks are nationwide, that emergency  
937 events are local, the bill directs the FCC to set clear  
938 expectations for roaming, mutual aid, backup power, and  
939 information sharing during disasters.

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940           We look forward to working with the subcommittee to improve  
941 the bill's focus on policies that further situational awareness  
942 among public safety stakeholders.

943           We support Representative McNerney's READI Act, which can  
944 help ensure that wireless emergency alerts remain a trusted tool  
945 by encouraging alert originators to avoid false alerts and harness  
946 new capabilities.

947           And we support Ranking Member Walden's FIRST RESPONDER Act  
948 because State and local governments shouldn't undermine public  
949 trust and safety by diverting any of the \$2.6 billion in 9-1-1  
950 fees that they collect from wireless consumers every year.

951           We also support this subcommittee's effort to make it easier  
952 to access the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by  
953 implementing 9-8-8. Call centers need sufficient funding to help  
954 people in crisis and we need an effective and equitable way to  
955 do that.

956           In closing, we will continue to invest in resiliency and  
957 enhance our coordination to make our network stronger. And we  
958 will work this subcommittee to set reasonable and flexible  
959 expectations that ensure wireless is there when Americans need  
960 it most.

961           Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I  
962 look forward to your questions.

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963 [The prepared statement of Mr. Gerst follows:]

964

965 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 6\*\*\*\*\*

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966 Mr. Doyle. Thank you.

967 Mr. Torres, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

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968 STATEMENT OF JOSEPH TORRES

969

970 Mr. Torres. Chairman Doyle, Ranking Member Latta, Chairman  
971 Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, and esteemed members of the  
972 subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify about the life  
973 and death issue of ensuring that communications networks properly  
974 serve all people in the United States, especially in times of  
975 crisis.

976 I am the Senior Director of Strategy and Engagement at Free  
977 Press and Free Press Action. I am here today on behalf of 1.4  
978 million members in all 50 States, the District of Columbia, and  
979 Puerto Rico.

980 Over the past couple of years, since Hurricanes Irma and  
981 Maria struck Puerto Rico in 2017, Free Press has worked with allies  
982 to ensure that lawmakers and regulators are crafting policies  
983 to rebuild communications in Puerto Rico and to hear directly  
984 from Puerto Ricans impacted by the disaster.

985 I am Puerto Rican and I grew up in New York City. Like so  
986 many Puerto Ricans growing up in the States, I often traveled  
987 as a kid to the Islands to visit my grandmother. Four of my Free  
988 Press colleagues also have their personal connection to Puerto  
989 Rico.

990 Hurricane Maria, a Category 4 storm, knocked out power and

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991 nearly the entire communications network on the Islands. This  
992 impacted recovery efforts. FEMA said it struggled to gain  
993 situational awareness and assess the status of critical  
994 infrastructure, in part, due to Puerto Rico's communication  
995 outages.

996 The president of Puerto Rico's Association of Emergency  
997 Managers told the Associated Press the biggest crisis after Maria  
998 was communication and that it unleashed an endless number of  
999 problems. Between 3,000 and 5,000 people died as a result of  
1000 Maria, making it one of the worst tragedies in U.S. history.  
1001 An inability of Puerto Ricans to communicate was a factor in the  
1002 death toll.

1003 My colleagues and I worked with Puerto Rican activists, when  
1004 we traveled to Puerto Rico in 2018, to learn how the communication  
1005 collapse impacted the people's lives. Residents of Vieques and  
1006 Comerio told us how the lack of communication limited their  
1007 mobility, left them without knowing where to search for food,  
1008 water, medical care, and how to reach loved ones, or get  
1009 information about mudslides. This is why a coalition of Puerto  
1010 Rican groups and leaders, and racial justice and public interest  
1011 groups have called on the Federal Communications Commission to  
1012 conduct an independent investigation into all the factors that  
1013 contributed to the communication crisis. Well, so far, the FCC

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1014 has failed to do so.

1015 In contrast, the FCC did investigate the communication  
1016 disruptions in the Florida Panhandle following Hurricane Michael,  
1017 also a Category 4 storm. The Commission found that the lack of  
1018 coordination among wireless and landline service providers, power  
1019 crews, and municipalities prolonged the restoration of service.

1020 We applauded the Commission for conducting the investigation  
1021 but we also are troubled by the disparity in treatment when it  
1022 comes to Puerto Rico. We believe that the longest known  
1023 communications blackout in modern U.S. history warrants and  
1024 investigation.

1025 Earlier this month, in a letter to Representative Yvette  
1026 Clarke, Chairman Pai praised the telecom carriers for applying  
1027 the lessons they learned after Hurricane Maria to rapidly restore  
1028 service in areas of Puerto Rico impacted by the recent earthquakes  
1029 but the lessons the Chairman alludes to have yet to be made public.

1030 Meanwhile, Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel criticized the  
1031 Commission last September for not having a clear picture of how  
1032 telecom companies, who have received Federal funding from the  
1033 FCC, have spent that money and for not knowing the precise status  
1034 of communication facilities on the Islands. She called this  
1035 approach an invitation for waste.

1036 We urge the committee to use its oversight power to ask

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1037 Chairman Pai to publicly share the lessons the carriers and the  
1038 Commission have learned from Hurricane Maria. Puerto Ricans  
1039 deserve to know the truth about what happened. They deserve a  
1040 comprehensive investigation into all the factors that contributed  
1041 to the communication crisis in Puerto  
1042 Rico. They deserve to know the FCC's response and they deserve  
1043 to know the industry's response. Learning about what happened  
1044 in Puerto Rico is critical to adopting policies to prevent this  
1045 from happening again, not just in Puerto Rico but everywhere else  
1046 in the country. The intensities of the storms and extreme weather  
1047 is only increasing damage due to climate change and hurricanes  
1048 like Maria may become the norm. This is why Free Press Action  
1049 is pleased that this committee is considering eight bills that  
1050 address various telecom issues, such as resilience, because  
1051 improving our communications networks following disaster is a  
1052 matter of life and death.

1053 Thank you, Chairman.

1054 [The prepared statement of Mr. Torres follows:]

1055

1056 \*\*\*\*\*INSERT 7\*\*\*\*\*



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1057 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

1058 We have now concluded our openings. We are going to move  
1059 to member questions. Each member will have 5 minutes to ask  
1060 questions of our witnesses.

1061 I will start by recognizing myself for 5 minutes.

1062 Mr. Gossner, when your department responded to the fires  
1063 in the communities you serve, what were the challenges you and  
1064 other first responders faced when the communication networks went  
1065 down for the people who live there?

1066 Mr. Gossner. For us, this was a no-notice event, right?

1067 So it happened very quickly and it impacted a large group of  
1068 people in both Napa and Sonoma Counties.

1069 One of the things that we tried to use was SoCo Alert, which  
1070 is a wireless technology to notify our constituents out there  
1071 to get out of the way. Due to the towers going down, we had up  
1072 to 70 towers go down early on in the process, the system did not  
1073 reach everyone, which made us, the Fire Department and law  
1074 enforcement, both City and Sheriff, go door-to-door. We had to  
1075 actually active get people out of the way. We could not really  
1076 fight the fire because we were too busy moving people out of the  
1077 way.

1078 There were a few instances where we had to put equipment  
1079 on bigger buildings with a lot of people in it, to make sure that

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1080 they survived, but the majority of the crews were out hustling  
1081 trying to get people out of their houses and just trying to get  
1082 them out of the way.

1083 And when you have a fire of that magnitude, by the time it  
1084 hit us, it was you know five miles wide with winds 60-70 miles  
1085 an hour. It is very difficult to evacuate an area as quickly  
1086 as it needs going door-to-door.

1087 So it was, without the towers, without the ability to send  
1088 the wireless alerts, it really hampered our ability to notify  
1089 the community to tell them to get out of the way.

1090 Mr. Doyle. Yes, we all on this committee want to thank you  
1091 and your heroic first responders for what you did. That was --  
1092 it is just hard to imagine the devastation that fire brought on  
1093 that community.

1094 Mr. Torres, why was it so devastating when communication  
1095 services went down in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria and what  
1096 did the people lose access to? And also, given the earthquake  
1097 that just hit the Island, do you think the Islands' communication  
1098 networks were any better prepared?

1099 Mr. Torres. We would like to know whether that is true or  
1100 not because the FCC has failed to investigate what happened.  
1101 We don't know whether -- like Commissioner Rosenworcel said, we  
1102 don't know the state of communication facilities. The fact that

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1103 31 percent of the wireless outages in Puerto Rico following the  
1104 -- it shows that there still needs -- resiliency still needs to  
1105 be hardened in Puerto Rico even after Maria.

1106 But we, yes, we just -- we are concerned. Even the inklings,  
1107 the little break comes that the telecom carriers have said after  
1108 Maria, telling to their investors, there is questions whether  
1109 they are going to invest. One company said they are not sure  
1110 they are going to reinvest. They are going to replace wired  
1111 lines. They are going to get people wireless instead of giving  
1112 -- replacing the wired line.

1113 So there is questions. That is the little bit of evidence  
1114 we have that leaves us concerned that perhaps companies are not  
1115 going to do everything they can on all different areas of Puerto  
1116 Rico to restore service the way it originally was prior to it.

1117 Mr. Doyle. Ms. Atkerson, in your testimony, you talked  
1118 about why it is so important for suicide crisis call centers to  
1119 have the resources they need to respond to meet the current needs  
1120 and to deal with the potential influx of calls, when a national  
1121 three-digit number is implemented. Can you talk about what we  
1122 risk if these call centers do not have the resources to respond  
1123 to the calls?

1124 Ms. Atkerson. Sure, absolutely. And just by way of  
1125 background, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is currently

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1126 a network of about 170 local call centers scattered in States  
1127 across the country. And at this time, the funding for those  
1128 centers is primarily comes from State funding -- or I am sorry  
1129 -- county and other local funding sources.

1130 There are some States that answer the majority of their calls  
1131 in-State. When a call center isn't adequately equipped, those  
1132 calls can be routed to one of the six national backup centers,  
1133 when a particular call center, depending on changes in volume,  
1134 becomes overwhelmed. That is not ideal for a number of reasons.

1135 We like when people -- when the calls can be answered in the  
1136 State in which the caller is. They have a better knowledge of  
1137 the local resources, can connect them more quickly to needed  
1138 services.

1139 So at this time, there are already States that are struggling  
1140 to keep up with the volume. When we see an implementation with  
1141 9-8-8, we do expect to see a pretty drastic increase in the volume  
1142 of calls. And the concern is that, if these call centers aren't  
1143 adequately through a more braided approach, including Federal  
1144 appropriations, the existing State options, giving States the  
1145 authority to collect fees from local carriers and their other  
1146 local sources, that more and more calls will have to be answered  
1147 out of State.

1148 Mr. Doyle. Thank you.

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1149 The chair now recognizes Mr. Latta for questions.

1150 Mr. Latta. And again, Mr. Chairman, thanks very much for  
1151 holding today's hearing. Again, thanks to our witnesses for  
1152 being here. We really appreciate your testimony.

1153 And I would like to follow up, Ms. Atkerson, if I may, on  
1154 what the chairman was just talking about because, again, as I  
1155 mentioned, I had Chairman Pai in my district in the last week.

1156 We were at the Rescue, Mental Health, and Addiction Services,  
1157 which is one of the many Lifeline call centers across the country.

1158 And again, our goal is to make sure we get this deployed as rapidly  
1159 as possible because, as mentioned, once we get the implementation  
1160 out there, it is likely to at least double the number of calls  
1161 that we had in 2018. So we want to make sure that this is done  
1162 right and get it done so we can be on that front line to make  
1163 sure that we are helping people and also saving lives.

1164 But if I could just follow up, as we talk about the  
1165 legislation calling for that implementation deadline in 1 year,  
1166 what would happen if 9-8-8 was implemented in 1 year and the call  
1167 centers weren't adequately prepared to handle that influx of  
1168 calls, especially when we are looking at that massive number that  
1169 could come in?

1170 I know when I was in Toledo with the Chairman, just seeing  
1171 how exponentially each year it has been going up. So what would

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1172 happen if we didn't have that ready to go?

1173 Ms. Atkerson. And you are correct about that. The Lifeline  
1174 actually experiences year-over-year increases of 50 percent --  
1175 or 15 percent in their calls to the Lifeline without the 9-8-8  
1176 legislation. So when we see this drastic uptick in calls, the  
1177 primary concern is that callers will -- the calls will go  
1178 unanswered. They will have long wait times and hang up or, if  
1179 those calls go unanswered in the State in which they are located,  
1180 that those will roll to one of these six national backup centers,  
1181 which, again, is not ideal because those folks don't have the  
1182 local knowledge of the support and resources and can't connect  
1183 the caller to emergency services, if needed.

1184 Mr. Latta. Let me follow up with one more. What type of  
1185 flexibility, if any, should we have out there during this  
1186 transition period?

1187 Ms. Atkerson. Flexibility in?

1188 Mr. Latta. For making sure you know make sure we can get  
1189 this done correctly and if you have to have some flexibility in  
1190 the implementation.

1191 Ms. Atkerson. Sure. And not being a communications  
1192 expert, I do want to say that we fully support the FCC's  
1193 recommendation around the timeline and encourage -- we support  
1194 Congress to work closely with the FCC, mental health providers,

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1195 other key stakeholders, people with lived experience, and the  
1196 crisis call centers themselves in coming up with an implementation  
1197 plan that is thoughtful but also rapid.

1198 Mr. Latta. Thank you very much.

1199 Mr. Gerst, if I could turn to you, would you provide an update  
1200 on how the FCC is expanding the voluntary Wireless Resiliency  
1201 Framework to include electric utilities and provide better  
1202 coordination with 9-1-1 call matters?

1203 Mr. Gerst. Sure. Thank you for the question, Congressman.

1204 So I just want to first start by acknowledging the stories  
1205 we heard and the way that people rely on wireless services during  
1206 emergency. It is one of the first thing you grab when an emergency  
1207 happens, whether you are calling 9-1-1, whether you need to  
1208 receive a wireless emergency alert, whether you are trying to  
1209 connect with friends or family. And those services, 9-1-1,  
1210 wireless emergency alerts, they depend on the wireless networks  
1211 being there and wireless depends on power being there to maintain  
1212 its services as well.

1213 We have taken steps to make sure that we can maintain our  
1214 services in the event of significant power outages but we need  
1215 to enhance our collaboration and coordination. And that is what  
1216 the FCC has been encouraging us to do.

1217 We do work with the power companies in a number of different

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1218 places. As Mr. Bell said, we work in State Emergency Operation  
1219 Centers. We work at tabletop exercises in-between hurricane and  
1220 wildfire seasons so that we can try to enhance our coordination.

1221 And we just announced today that the Edison Electric  
1222 Institute and CTIA are going to be bringing our member companies  
1223 together in a different way because we know that, even with all  
1224 those efforts, we have still had challenges after Hurricane  
1225 Michael in California.

1226 So we do think that there is more work that can be done and  
1227 we are hopeful that this new collaborate effort, this voluntary  
1228 collaborative effort will help to enhance our capabilities.

1229 Mr. Latta. Thank you.

1230 Mr. Bell, would you like to follow up on -- in my last 30  
1231 seconds on that?

1232 Lower your mic, please.

1233 Mr. Bell. The Disaster Recovery Group and the BDAC will  
1234 be issuing a report, hopefully, by the end of March. We are  
1235 meeting to finalize that this afternoon on ways that the two  
1236 industries can work together.

1237 The communication industry has changed over the years. It  
1238 used to be there were very large bundles of copper that fell on  
1239 the ground and they worked, even when they were falling on the  
1240 ground. And typically, the electric utility would go in first,



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1241 and the telephone company would follow, and we wouldn't have to  
1242 be there at the same time.

1243 Today, fiberoptic cable carries a whole lot more -- has a  
1244 whole lot more capacity than those do and so a break in a fiber  
1245 optic cable can cause a very significant problem. So the  
1246 communication industry is there at the same time we are and that  
1247 is one of the issues we are working through is how do we coordinate  
1248 that effort.

1249 Mr. Latta. Well, thank you very much.

1250 And Mr. Chairman, I yield back and thank you for your  
1251 indulgence.

1252 Mr. Doyle. I thank the ranking member.

1253 The chair now recognizes Mr. McNerney for 5 minutes.

1254 Mr. McNerney. I thank the chairman for holding this  
1255 hearing. I thank the witnesses this morning. I appreciate your  
1256 testimony, especially Mr. Gossner. I appreciate your work in  
1257 Santa Rosa and in helping us here in our legislative process.

1258 As Fire Chief of the City of Santa Rosa, is wildfire season  
1259 something that you are worried about only during May to October  
1260 or has it become a year-round concern?

1261 Mr. Gossner. It is definitely becoming a year-round  
1262 concern. We do have a wet season in northern California but I  
1263 will tell you that our fire seasons start earlier, so a month,

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1264 month and a half earlier and they are lasting a month to 2 months  
1265 longer. So while it is not completely year-round, when it is  
1266 not active firefighting, we are preparing for the next season.  
1267 So we consider it a year-round endeavor.

1268 Mr. McNerney. Thank you.

1269 In your written testimony, you noted the benefits of  
1270 installing more fail-safe battery systems at cell towers and  
1271 increasing the number of sites with backup generators. Can you  
1272 expand a little bit on how this will help your first responders  
1273 during emergencies?

1274 Mr. Gossner. Yes, this allows us to communicate with all  
1275 of our constituents within the city and then it helps with  
1276 constituents in the county. We work really close with Sonoma  
1277 County emergency managers so we are always trying to -- how do  
1278 we make sure we meet our expectations, their expectations that  
1279 they are notified as quick as they can?

1280 So when you harden a tower, you are not going to be able  
1281 to harden it against everything but you can harden it to withstand  
1282 a little bit of a heat threat. You can harden it to stand --  
1283 withstand some earthquake. You can harden these resources and  
1284 have backup batteries or generators that when there is a power  
1285 outage, due to a power shutoff or for whatever reason, they are  
1286 up and running and we are able to communicate to our members the

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1287 needs that they are going to have to take or the actions that  
1288 they are going to have to take.

1289 On a no-notice fire, where it takes out numerous cell towers,  
1290 you can't get the message out and it is deadly, right? So it  
1291 is one thing I will tell you, we had the Kincade fire in 2019  
1292 but we had notice of that fire and we were able to evacuate the  
1293 City of Healdsburg, the City of -- the Town of Windsor, and a  
1294 large portion of Sonoma County because we had the ability and  
1295 time to do it, and we had the resources to do it. Back in 2017,  
1296 we just didn't because there was too many cell towers that were  
1297 down.

1298 Mr. McNerney. Thank you.

1299 Mr. Gerst, during the wildfire season this past fall, there  
1300 were hundreds of cell towers that went down in Contra Costa County,  
1301 which is part of my district. We lost 88 cell towers. Since  
1302 that time, when the wildfires took place, what additional  
1303 investments have members made in backup power capabilities?

1304 Mr. Gerst. Congressman, thank you for the question. And  
1305 first, again, thank you for your leadership in the RESILIENT  
1306 Networks Act and the READI Act.

1307 And I want to acknowledge the challenges that your  
1308 constituents probably faced in the last power-down issues in  
1309 California, and we are committed to doing better. Two of the

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1310 ways that we are going to do that is by enhancing our coordination  
1311 and collaboration with the electric utilities. That is the main  
1312 reason for our announcement today with the Edison Electric  
1313 Institute. We have to do something differently there.

1314 The second thing we are going to do is evaluating our backup  
1315 power capabilities. We have hundreds of thousands of cell sites  
1316 throughout the country. We have thousands of cell sites, as you  
1317 know, throughout California. Each one of them we have to look  
1318 at a case-by-case basis of what backup power solutions we can  
1319 have available to us. We are talking about different types of  
1320 battery sizes, right? We are not talking about the batteries  
1321 you can go to CVS and get. We are talking about cabinet-size  
1322 batteries. We are talking about truck-size generators. And  
1323 those all come with different challenges in how we deploy them.

1324 We are committed to looking at existing cell sites, new cell  
1325 sites, and diversifying the solutions because, if this is going  
1326 to be the new normal, we need to maintain service.

1327 Mr. McNerney. Well, good. The RESILIENT Networks Act  
1328 would ensure that we have the necessary backup power during times  
1329 of emergency and I hope we can move quickly on this piece of  
1330 legislation.

1331 Mr. Gossner, again, in your written testimony, you note that  
1332 when it comes to targeting a WEA alert, knowing that towers --

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1333 knowing where the cell towers are located is critical. Did the  
1334 City of Santa Rosa have access to information about cell tower  
1335 locations during recent wildfires?

1336 Mr. Gossner. We have general information. So we don't --  
1337 when I say that, we did some testing. And if you have a -- I  
1338 will just use Verizon and AT&T handset, one might go off and the  
1339 other one won't because we are hitting a certain tower in that  
1340 geofencing. What we really need is where are those towers and  
1341 how during an emergency those towers need to cross-communicate  
1342 so they hit everyone, not based on your carrier but based on the  
1343 emergency.

1344 And so that is, the geofencing wall, it is very big right  
1345 now and they are going to tighten it down. When I say big, it  
1346 spills over a great deal and notifies communities that aren't  
1347 even near the impacted area when you try to target it. So the  
1348 geotargeting is great, as long as all of the cell towers are,  
1349 within the system, working as they are supposed to and they  
1350 communicate with each other in time of need. We can't have one  
1351 cell tower activated and the other one not because of your carrier.  
1352 It is an emergency.

1353 And you know it is a touristy area, too. So you have got  
1354 people from other areas.

1355 Mr. McNerney. I go there.

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1356 Mr. Gossner. Yes.

1357 Mr. McNerney. So at any rate, Mr. Chairman, before I yield  
1358 back, I would like to present a letter for the record from PG&E  
1359 about the RESILIENT Act.

1360 Mr. Doyle. Without objection, so ordered.

1361 [The information follows:]

1362

1363 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*

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1364 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

1365 The chair now recognizes my good friend from Houston, Mr.  
1366 Olson, for 5 minutes.

1367 Mr. Olson. I thank the chair and welcome to our six experts.  
1368 Texas 22 is the southwest suburbs of Houston, Texas. Right now,  
1369 we have one million people in Texas 22. That makes it the largest  
1370 congressional district in America and that growth means problems  
1371 when a disaster hits, like a hurricane.

1372 We have many monikers about my home area. It is the home  
1373 of the Imperial Sugar Company. It is called the Energy Capital  
1374 of the World. It is called Space City, U.S.A. And it is also  
1375 called part of Hurricane Alley. And we will get hit by a hurricane  
1376 again. It is not a matter of if but when.

1377 We have suffered the worst natural disaster in our country's  
1378 history, the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, 12,000 people killed  
1379 with no chance to know it was coming their way. We had Hurricane  
1380 Carla in 1961, the most intense Gulf hurricane ever. We had  
1381 Hurricane Alicia in 1983. It wiped out the Texas Medical Center.

1382 We had Hurricane Ike in 2008, which rebounded. The storm surge  
1383 came back down Galveston Bay and hit Galveston on the back side.

1384 And as you all know, we had Harvey hit us twice in 2017.

1385 A working communication network saves lives during  
1386 disasters. The system during Harvey was much better than during

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1387 Hurricane Ike. We had real-time information about tornadoes that  
1388 popped up, about roads that were impassible, about routes to get  
1389 away from your home that may be flooded, where gas stations were  
1390 open, grocery stores were open. That information saved lives.

1391 So my question is for you, Mr. Gerst, if you want to add  
1392 in Mr. Henry, is I support a robust disaster information reporting  
1393 system for carriers, broadcasters, and cable providers so they  
1394 can report their operational status during these emergencies but  
1395 currently, the system is voluntary and certain information is  
1396 kept confidential. Why is that the case for the communications  
1397 industry, in particular?

1398 Mr. Gerst. Congressman, thank you very much for the  
1399 question and acknowledging the challenges that increasing  
1400 severity and intensity of these storms are going to present,  
1401 particularly for your area.

1402 We were actually very proud of the experience of Hurricane  
1403 Harvey in terms of the availability of services. Ninety-six  
1404 percent of cell sites were up, 300 wireless emergency alerts,  
1405 96,000 9-1-1 calls made, people organizing themselves for  
1406 rescues.

1407 In other emergencies -- in all emergencies it is important  
1408 for first responders and public safety stakeholders to have  
1409 information about the status of communication networks so that



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1410 they can better prioritize where their resources are going to  
1411 go. That data about cell tower information, though, is both  
1412 competitively sensitive and, potentially, a national security  
1413 threat in terms of how it is exposed. We are committed to working  
1414 with the FCC, with this committee, with stakeholders to identify  
1415 ways to expand access to that information in a way that can protect  
1416 that information.

1417 Just tomorrow, we expect that the FCC is going to be opening  
1418 up a new public meeting that will be talking about that exact  
1419 issue and we look forward to a robust record developing there.

1420 And we think that there will be some new information gained by  
1421 engaging with stakeholders there. But we are absolutely  
1422 committed to enhancing information sharing with public safety  
1423 stakeholders.

1424 Mr. Olson. Thank you. Mr. Henry, any comments on the  
1425 question, sir?

1426 Mr. Henry. Yes. And first, thank you for the question and  
1427 for the opportunity -- excuse me -- to discuss this. We share  
1428 sentiments with CTIA on this that we really do need a more robust  
1429 information flow going to and from public safety.

1430 I think the only thing that I would like to add on to this,  
1431 and you know Houston is the perfect example: 9-1-1 is public  
1432 safety and public safety is, at the end of the day, Homeland

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1433 Security.

1434 Mr. Olson. Yes.

1435 Mr. Henry. And public safety can be trusted with this  
1436 information, whether it you know be you know competitively  
1437 sensitive or sensitive in the sense of national security.

1438 You know when the threat to national security is a city being  
1439 wiped out by a natural disaster, that is as much of a concern  
1440 as anything else. Public safety has established standards and  
1441 practices for dealing with sensitive information. We do it every  
1442 day and don't have any sort of hesitation about being able to  
1443 keep that visible to only eyes that need it.

1444 Mr. Olson. I do have to thank your industry for what you  
1445 did during Hurricane Harvey because I was there for Hurricane  
1446 Ike and people didn't have information. They got on the roads  
1447 when they should not have. Probably 50 people died and that is  
1448 a big standard of deaths in terms of how well we are doing. And  
1449 Brazoria County, right there on the Gulf of Mexico, had zero deaths  
1450 during Hurricane Harvey. And the entire county was basically  
1451 flooded from the Gulf halfway up to Pearland, Texas. So thank  
1452 you for making that happen.

1453 A big transition -- and this is for you, Ms. Atkerson. Back  
1454 home, my church had -- I am involved with a small bible study  
1455 group that gets together every Monday after the weekly service

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1456 to just talk about this service and lessons learned.

1457           This past week was a very different meeting. We spent the  
1458 entire hour, bumped it up to an hour and a half talking about  
1459 a very tragic situation. One of our members, he works at a local  
1460 store down there in Sugar Land, a co-worker lost his son to suicide  
1461 this past week. She had lost a second son to suicide a few years  
1462 ago and I cannot believe the pain she is going through.

1463           And my question is this -- I support this bill that gets  
1464 9-8-8 going because we don't know if these boys could have had  
1465 a number to call when they were in their crisis, can they reach  
1466 out, could they, what happened? We will never know but how --  
1467 do you have any advice I can tell her from you what is going to  
1468 happen with this system and how she can utilize it to make sure  
1469 she is not -- this never happens again, that these kids, who are  
1470 about they think the ultimate thing to do to take their lives,  
1471 have a vehicle to vent and get some help to stop those suicidal  
1472 thoughts?

1473           Ms. Atkerson. Yes, absolutely. And I am very sorry to hear  
1474 about the loss in your community. This is, obviously, a very  
1475 difficult topic. Just one suicide death is estimate to affect  
1476 at least six other people or more. And so we see a tremendous  
1477 ripple effect and the numbers just continue to increase, as you  
1478 all know, year after year in this country. It is a tragedy.

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1479           One of the challenges has been that there hasn't been a  
1480           comparable system to what we have for medical emergencies. We  
1481           don't have an easy -- most of us can't remember a time when we  
1482           just didn't have 9-1-1 available to us, no matter where we are  
1483           in this country to rapidly access medical care.

1484           Sadly, the same kind of three-digit rapid response has not  
1485           been available for people in a mental health crisis. And as you  
1486           are saying firsthand, people in a suicidal or mental health  
1487           crisis, it can be just as life-threatening as a stroke or a heart  
1488           attack. So transitioning the National Suicide Prevention  
1489           Lifeline from a difficult to remember ten-digit hotline that still  
1490           many, many people in this country don't have memorized or just  
1491           imagine how difficult it is to try to think about what that number  
1492           is if you are a mother with a child that is suicidal trying to  
1493           remember a ten-digit number versus you know 9-1-1 or 9-8-8.

1494           So what I can say is, going forward, the urgency, this is  
1495           a moral imperative for us to pass this legislation so that 9-8-8  
1496           can be easily recognizable and accessible to all of our kids,  
1497           family members, parents, to anyone in this country anytime.

1498           Thank you.

1499           Mr. Olson. Thank you.

1500           Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

1501           Mr. Olson. Chairman, thank you for your indulgence. I

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1502 yield back.

1503 Mr. Latta. The chair recognizes Ms. Clarke for 5 minutes.

1504 Ms. Clarke. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thank  
1505 our ranking member for this very enlightening hearing today.  
1506 I want to thank our witnesses for bringing your expert testimony  
1507 to bear.

1508 This is an extremely important hearing today. As a New  
1509 Yorker, I can reflect on my experiences in the aftermath of both  
1510 the 9/11 terrorist attack and, years later, Superstorm Sandy to  
1511 refresh my memory on how important network resiliency is to my  
1512 constituents and to all Americans.

1513 Today I want to first discuss the Americans who the Trump  
1514 administration has too often treated with disdain and overlooked,  
1515 the citizens in Puerto Rico. They have experienced a series of  
1516 natural disasters that have become more frequent and more severe  
1517 due to climate change.

1518 To echo Mr. Torres' statements in his written statement,  
1519 quote, Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens but, tragically, their  
1520 voices have been largely absent from this crucial debate and the  
1521 restoration and rebuilding processes have suffered as a result,  
1522 end quote.

1523 The earthquakes that rocked Puerto Rico left the territory  
1524 without power and led to 31.7 percent of cell sites down and left

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1525 approximately 260,000 cable and wireline subscribers without  
1526 service. My colleagues, Congressman Ruiz, Soto, and I read a  
1527 letter to the FCC to raise concern about the fragility about the  
1528 communication infrastructure on the Islands.

1529 So my first question is actually to you, Mr. Torres. The  
1530 FCC is supposed to measure whether broadband is being deployed  
1531 in a timely fashion across the United States and it is supposed  
1532 to know when and where the networks go out in times of disaster.

1533 Can you discuss how the lack of real-time information on  
1534 the network outages impacted people on the Islands and their loved  
1535 ones in the rest of the United States trying to reach them?

1536 Mr. Torres. Sure, I will give you two examples. One is  
1537 the most recent example, the earthquakes. There was a person,  
1538 a well-known activist tweeting can anyone -- on Twitter because  
1539 she didn't have communications. She didn't have a mobile -- can  
1540 anyone let me know if there is a tsunami coming? Because they  
1541 didn't -- they weren't aware whether there was a tsunami warning  
1542 because there was a lot of fear in Puerto Rico that a tsunami  
1543 potentially was going to happen.

1544 The second example I give is from the Public Safety Workshop  
1545 that the FCC held a couple of years ago after Maria in the hurricane  
1546 season 2017. And so this is a regional emergency communications  
1547 coordinator of FEMA who said the voluntary -- testifying to the

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1548 FCC at a hearing -- at a workshop -- the voluntary word needs  
1549 to go, when it comes to like wires resiliency. We have a  
1550 commercial entity selling themselves as public-safety grade.  
1551 If you are going to make a profit saying you are a servant to  
1552 the community with public safety grade communications, then you  
1553 need to be able to prepare an answer in response as to where  
1554 communications are available. The point was being made, at that  
1555 workshop, that they are not getting information fast enough at  
1556 the FCC. And because of issue of it is voluntary, it is  
1557 proprietary, they are saying by the time we are getting  
1558 information, especially in the case of Puerto Rico, it was already  
1559 up. It was sending people to places to repair cell sites and  
1560 all that and they were already repaired in some cases. They  
1561 didn't -- it was wasting time to be able to serve other places.

1562 So we have examples of people on the ground worried about  
1563 tsunami warnings. We have a FEMA official concerned they are  
1564 not getting real-time data fast enough. So we need -- so Puerto  
1565 Ricans needed, and everywhere else needs data information much  
1566 more quickly to first responders.

1567 Ms. Clarke. So can the FCC do more to gather and disseminate  
1568 information about communication network reliability during and  
1569 immediately after such storms?

1570 Mr. Torres. Say that one more time.

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1571 Ms. Clarke. Yes. I am saying can the FCC do more to gather?

1572 Mr. Torres. Absolutely. First of all like we don't believe  
1573 there should be voluntary. It should be mandatory that they  
1574 participate. And also you know the Wireless Resiliency Framework  
1575 like is voluntary and we don't believe it should be voluntary.

1576 We need it to be more rigorous oversight over these companies  
1577 because they have to be held -- folks have to be held accountable  
1578 for not responding.

1579 It is a life and death issue. So like this gentleman said,  
1580 the FEMA official, that it can't be voluntary. There has to be  
1581 some sort of process of accountability.

1582 Ms. Clarke. Very well. Mr. Gerst, would you want to  
1583 respond to that?

1584 Mr. Gerst. Sure. First let me start by saying,  
1585 Congressman, thank you for the question.

1586 Maria was a devastating event for everyone. Our companies  
1587 had to go to unprecedented lengths to restore services there.

1588 In fact, one of our member companies had their generator actually  
1589 powering the airport, at one point, just to get supplies into  
1590 Puerto Rico. But we have invested in Puerto Rico and I think  
1591 the results show that we have moved from wood poles to steel poles.

1592 We have invested in backup power. And after the earthquake,  
1593 68 percent of cell sites were up.



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1594 I know there is a close relationship between first responders  
1595 in New York and Puerto Rico. And in fact, I have talked to a  
1596 few who say that, after the earthquake, nothing worked in Puerto  
1597 Rico except the wireless service. So it wasn't everywhere and  
1598 we need to do more but we have learned lessons and applied them  
1599 in Puerto Rico.

1600 Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1601 Mr. Doyle. The gentlewoman's time has expired. Thank you.

1602 Mr. Johnson, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

1603 Mr. Johnson. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1604 Mr. Bell, you know while ensuring network resiliency is  
1605 certainly an important overarching goal, I want to be sure that  
1606 the electric and communications industries aren't faced with  
1607 one-size-fits-all requirements that fail to consider the  
1608 realities on the ground.

1609 Can you walk us through how your industry engages with State  
1610 Emergency Operation Centers during emergencies and how that  
1611 coordination could inform priorities for restoration efforts?

1612 For example, how the fact that it is harvest time in one area  
1613 or geographical factors in a particular area where an outage might  
1614 come into play factor into prioritization?

1615 Mr. Bell. Certainly. Thank you for the question.

1616 It is actually our primary contact at the Emergency

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1617 Operations Center is a member of my staff. And as soon as the  
1618 center opens up, he goes over there and is there you know for  
1619 the duration of the storm working on shifts, as we can. And there  
1620 is where the communication takes place.

1621 We get priorities from things that we may not be aware of  
1622 and to go through them. In some cases, there was an example in  
1623 Hurricane Michael where we actually got a call from the Florida  
1624 Emergency Operations Center that an ILEC in Florida thought there  
1625 was a hold on a pole in Georgia put on by the Georgia DOT. And  
1626 so it was just a whole cascade of events that someone on the ground  
1627 could not figure out how do I find out if I can go ahead and proceed  
1628 with this. All the people who are right there in the Emergency  
1629 Operations Center are able to determine no, everything is clear  
1630 with that; you can keep going and get the people back to work  
1631 in the field.

1632 So it is -- in Hurricane Michael as well, one of the critical  
1633 issues is not something you would normally think of. It was  
1634 actually at peanut harvest time. And a lot of the damage that  
1635 came through Georgia came through one of the largest areas where  
1636 we grow peanuts. And so a lot of the focus was was to get the  
1637 infrastructure back in place so those peanuts could be processed  
1638 while still working on the rest of the storm and making sure all  
1639 the other critical infrastructure is being done.

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1640 Mr. Johnson. So it is a pretty real-time dynamic kind of  
1641 thing.

1642 Mr. Bell. It is absolutely real time.

1643 Mr. Johnson. Okay.

1644 Mr. Gerst, you referenced many of the mobile cell units in  
1645 your testimony from COWs or Cells on Wheels to COLTs or Cells  
1646 on Light Trucks. I am curious if there are regulatory obstacles  
1647 that make it difficult to move those assets from region to region  
1648 or State to State.

1649 Mr. Gerst. Congressman, thank you for the question.

1650 Yes, we have many tools at our disposal that we attempt to  
1651 use to maintain service and these are things that we have used  
1652 applying lessons learned from previous storms. And some of the  
1653 things we have incorporated into our Cooperative Framework,  
1654 including things like mutual aid, where we will actually repair  
1655 each other's cell sites, and you know coordinating with local  
1656 governments.

1657 But yes, we have -- where we do have outages, we have the  
1658 ability to bring in temporary cell sites and we actually call  
1659 them a barnyard of solutions because there are cells on the back  
1660 of trucks but we call them COWs, and COLTs, and GOATs. But we  
1661 are starting to actually even use drones now, where you can add  
1662 coverage where a cell site might have gone down and call it the

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1663 Flying COW.

1664 Mr. Johnson. Are there Government regulations that make  
1665 it difficult for you to do that kind of move from region to region  
1666 and State to State, though?

1667 Mr. Bell. Thank you, Congressman. Yes, there are  
1668 challenges but we are engaged with the State Emergency Operations  
1669 Center and, typically, we can address those issues and get those  
1670 resources in those areas. Certainly the SANDy Act helped by  
1671 making sure that communications were prioritized as being part  
1672 of that effort.

1673 So yes, there are challenges but we are working with local  
1674 governments on that.

1675 Mr. Johnson. Okay. Ensuring continuing -- ensuring  
1676 previously established procedures and coordination amongst  
1677 wireless providers, backhaul providers, and power companies  
1678 before a disaster strikes is critical to effective restoration  
1679 efforts when power and communication systems go down. The FCC's  
1680 Disaster Response and Recovery Group is currently looking at these  
1681 types of issues and hopes to submit best practices recommendations  
1682 to the FCC soon.

1683 So Mr. Bell, can you talk a bit about this group, its work,  
1684 and its importance?

1685 Mr. Bell. Well yes, and I will commend Commissioner Pai

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1686 for establishing the BDAC. It is a much better way for us to  
1687 resolve issues like this. The old way was they would put out  
1688 a request for comment; you would submit your comments and hope  
1689 that somebody actually read them and try and advocate on them.

1690 Here --

1691 Mr. Johnson. Because my time is running out --

1692 Mr. Bell. Okay.

1693 Mr. Johnson. -- can you add to your answer? Would it be  
1694 prudent for Congress to review this group's recommendations for  
1695 best practices before contemplating legislative action?

1696 Mr. Bell. Absolutely. Absolutely.

1697 Mr. Johnson. Okay. All right, well thank you very much.

1698 Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

1699 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back. The chair now  
1700 recognizes Mr. Veasey for 5 minutes.

1701 Mr. Veasey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1702 I wanted to ask Mr. Gossner a question. In Texas, we have  
1703 had some issues with wildfires in the past as well and I don't  
1704 know that that was something that has been in the news a lot around  
1705 California, particularly your area. And I wanted to know what  
1706 you thought about the access to batteries.

1707 I know that, for instance, cell phone companies that may  
1708 have -- that are trying to replenish batteries that only can last

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1709 a few hours can have trouble getting to certain areas if they  
1710 are in evac zones or if certain roads have been blocked off or  
1711 cut off. What sort of lessons should we learn about being able  
1712 to have access to those areas in the time of wildfires? Is there  
1713 anything differently that can be done as far as being able to  
1714 give them the access that they need so people can have their cell  
1715 coverage restored in a more faster fashion?

1716 Mr. Gossner. Yes, thank you.

1717 I think you know part of it is they have to understand the  
1718 environment they are going into. So I don't know who they are  
1719 talking to. From our perspective, if we need to get power backup  
1720 into a certain area and we can allow them, we will. Sometimes  
1721 we send a crew with them to make sure it is safe. Sometimes their  
1722 crew don't want -- doesn't want to go into it because they don't  
1723 feel safe.

1724 So there is multiple factors that drive why some towers get  
1725 back up and some don't but those are all real discussions we have  
1726 to have now and figure that out so, when we entertain these ideas  
1727 in the future, we can work through the process quickly and figure  
1728 out is this a critical tower or is it not a critical tower. If  
1729 it is a critical tower, we have got to make every effort to get  
1730 those up and running so we can provide the communication and then  
1731 build out from there.

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1732           But there is multiple reasons why crews can or cannot go  
1733 in on both sides of the fence. So it is literally face-to-face  
1734 sitting down. How do we work through this?

1735           Mr. Veasey. Right. Right, exactly.

1736           One of the things that I read about the California incidents  
1737 that interested me was, you know obviously, the use of internet.

1738           And I was reading that the internet landlines almost all, you  
1739 know a lot of them mostly failed, but that the traditional-based  
1740 copper landlines did not fail. Do you think that there needs  
1741 to be some sort of a -- just to maybe sort of make people think  
1742 about using more traditional products that live in these more  
1743 rural areas that are hard to reach, where they may be more affected  
1744 by wildfires?

1745           I know that we are very reliant, obviously, up on the newest  
1746 technology but do you think, under these sorts of circumstances,  
1747 that maybe, until a lot of these problems can be addressed, that  
1748 we need to like maybe look back at more traditional landline  
1749 products?

1750           Mr. Gossner. Yes, traditional landlines do last longer than  
1751 the voiceover internet protocol-type lines. They are not  
1752 failsafe but they do last longer.

1753           What I am being told today is that they are trying to  
1754 transition out of copper altogether because the wireless

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1755 technology, and the cable, the fiber optics is so much more  
1756 powerful and better.

1757 Mr. Veasey. Right.

1758 Mr. Gossner. So they are trailing away from the copper.

1759 Copper doesn't need power to maintain that connectivity, where  
1760 everything else does.

1761 So I will tell you in Sonoma County -- I am going to get  
1762 these numbers a little bit wrong but Sonoma County 10 years ago,  
1763 there was 350,000 people that had copper lines. Today, it is  
1764 about 170,000 because everyone is making the transition to  
1765 wireless. That is another reason why these towers need to be  
1766 hardened. Everything needs to be to that standard, where we can  
1767 rely on these components much more than we can now.

1768 Mr. Veasey. This is fascinating.

1769 What about as far as translation for people that live in  
1770 these areas? Obviously, things need to be, especially in a State  
1771 like Texas, or even California, obviously things would need to  
1772 be translated into Spanish, for instance. Is there sufficient  
1773 information out there as far as translation is concerned? Do  
1774 you feel that that is being adequately addressed?

1775 Mr. Gossner. It is being addressed. I don't know if I would  
1776 say it is adequately being addressed. I will tell you, though,  
1777 that WEA 2.0 and 3.0 addresses that. So the 360 characters also



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1778 adds a translation for Spanish, where the initial WEA product  
1779 did not, right, 90 characters and there was no Spanish  
1780 translation.

1781 So they are working towards that but, again, it is a process  
1782 and it is a slow process.

1783 Mr. Veasey. Yes. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate  
1784 your time.

1785 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1786 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

1787 Mrs. Brooks, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

1788 Mrs. Brooks. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for holding  
1789 this important hearing.

1790 When I first came to Congress, I was co-chair -- or I was  
1791 chair of the Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response,  
1792 and Communications. And I just want to thank all of you for your  
1793 work because I think we all know that in a time of disaster, this  
1794 super computer we hold is often kind of our only lifeline and  
1795 it is so important that we figure out how to make sure that we  
1796 are as resilient as possible in times of disaster.

1797 Mr. Gerst, I am co-chair of the 5G Caucus and so I want to  
1798 ask a little bit about 5G, as the country is transitioning to  
1799 the Next Generation of technology, what this transition means  
1800 for the resiliency of wireless networks. And clearly, there is

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1801 a different architecture. Companies are deploying these small  
1802 cells, naturally densifying networks, having actually maybe a  
1803 lot more. Can you tell me how this important conversion, what  
1804 resiliency is going to be impacted by the rollout of the 5G across  
1805 the country?

1806 Mr. Gerst. Absolutely, Congresswoman. Thank you for your  
1807 question and thank you for your leadership on 5G issues, making  
1808 sure that the U.S. is the global leader and 5G is a priority for  
1809 everyone I know, including you.

1810 5G is going to bring incredible opportunities -- the high  
1811 capacity/low latency capabilities, particularly for public  
1812 safety. And public safety can use those capabilities actually  
1813 in the field for innovations that Mr. Henry could probably talk  
1814 to you about.

1815 But you know from our perspective, we need hundreds of  
1816 thousands of new cell sites to make that happen to get to that  
1817 level of service for 5G. And the way that we build networks now  
1818 is we do build them in redundant, diverse, and densified ways.

1819 So even if some cell sites go down, we do try to maintain coverage  
1820 for emergency communications. By adding hundreds of thousands  
1821 of new cell sites that 5G is going to bring, we absolutely believe  
1822 it will help to improve resiliency.

1823 And we think that the RESILIENT Networks Act is a

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1824 forward-looking bill. It talks about 5G, and how it might improve  
1825 resiliency, and we appreciate that. Mrs. Brooks. Thank  
1826 you. Anyone else want to comment on 5G resiliency or  
1827 capabilities?

1828 Okay, I will move on, then.

1829 Mr. Henry, how does the practice of diverting 9-1-1 fees  
1830 affect the ability to ensure 9-1-1 systems keep pace with  
1831 technological changes and the ability to engage in effective  
1832 long-term planning? Because we need to ensure that 9-1-1  
1833 services, obviously, provide the best emergency service as  
1834 possible, so can you talk to us a bit more about -- you talked  
1835 about the number of States that we know that do divert and yet  
1836 -- and the practice that our States have to maintain to make sure  
1837 that communities aren't diverting?

1838 Mr. Henry. Sure and thank you for the question.

1839 I guess top line, 9-1-1 fee diversion hurts not just the  
1840 public but it also hurts public safety. It hurts in the sense  
1841 that the folks making budget decisions about 9-1-1 are often not  
1842 the people operating the PSAPs and they are not the people that  
1843 are directing a State's 9-1-1 budget planning and policies.

1844 One of the big effects that we have seen over the decade  
1845 or so that FCC has been keeping records on these things, is that  
1846 diversion often happens in sort of fits and spurts. And so the

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1847 9-1-1 authority in the State, or you know the 9-1-1 governance  
1848 structure in a State may be surprised by a diversion of funds  
1849 from the top of the State level.

1850 And so the aggregate effect of that is that you know you  
1851 have always got to prepare for you know a budgetary tornado to  
1852 come through and wipe out a good chunk of your funding for 9-1-1.

1853 You get into a damage control mode, instead of a continuous  
1854 improvement and a continuous innovation mode, where you are  
1855 preparing for the next thing. You are constantly, instead,  
1856 preparing for the next disaster, whether that be a literal  
1857 disaster or a budgetary disaster.

1858 Mrs. Brooks. What percentage would you say of the 9-1-1  
1859 capabilities now are text capabilities?

1860 I know our State has texting capabilities in 9-1-1. Is that  
1861 very common now in many of the other States?

1862 Mr. Henry. It is, I wouldn't say very common; probably 30  
1863 to 40 percent coverage. And of course, the difficulty with that  
1864 is that you don't find out that you can't text 9-1-1 --

1865 Mrs. Brooks. Right.

1866 Mr. Henry. -- until you find out you can't text 9-1-1.

1867 Mrs. Brooks. Okay, thank you.

1868 Mr. Chairman, I just want to mention, in response to our  
1869 colleague Ms. Clarke's question about the FCC doing more to garner

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1870 or to gather and information and disseminate data during  
1871 disasters. The FCC is planning on acting tomorrow on a second  
1872 further notice of proposed rulemaking to do just that, I have  
1873 been informed by staff. I just thought I would share that we  
1874 should look for further proposed rulemaking tomorrow.

1875 With that, I yield back.

1876 Mr. Doyle. The gentlelady yields back.

1877 The chair now recognizes Ms. Eshoo for 5 minutes.

1878 Ms. Eshoo. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to all  
1879 of the witnesses for your testimony.

1880 If I were to summarize all the various things that have been  
1881 said, there are two things that stand out: what kind of system  
1882 we have and how much more we need to do to optimize the system  
1883 that we have. And when there are cracks in the system, people's  
1884 lives are at stake.

1885 I want to read two of many messages I received from  
1886 constituents during the PG&E shutoffs last October, which  
1887 resulted, of course, in the loss of cellular communications.  
1888 A family from a rural area of my district -- yes, Silicon Valley  
1889 does have some very beautiful rural areas -- quote, when PG&E  
1890 cuts the power off, those of us who live in rural areas are not  
1891 only left without electricity, we are left without  
1892 communications. Cell phones don't work. Landlines don't work.

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1893       Generators don't keep the Wi-Fi on. Why are we being left out  
1894 to dry? We have no way to call 9-1-1 in an emergency and no way  
1895 to get alerts if there is danger and we need to evacuate.

1896           Another constituent wrote: During the second more recent  
1897 outage, we had broadband and phone for only 15 hours. It then  
1898 failed, leaving us with no means of communication. That is a  
1899 -- that is a scary term: no means of communication in the United  
1900 States of America.

1901           This is a serious safety concern. This is not just an  
1902 annoyance. If there were to be a fire in our highly vulnerable  
1903 tinder-dry area, we wouldn't be able to report it, wasting  
1904 precious time while it spreads. The same is true if there were  
1905 any sort of medical emergency.

1906           So these people are understandably: A) they are vulnerable;  
1907 B) they are afraid. And they are justifiably upset and so am  
1908 I. So, we have to help them.

1909           Chief Gossner, I want to salute you, as others have, for  
1910 your absolutely superb leadership. You, your department, and  
1911 the people of Sonoma County and Santa Rosa have been through actual  
1912 hell -- lives lost, devastation, homes lost, hope lost.

1913           And when I went up to visit and to hear from the entire team,  
1914 it will always remain with me, grown men weeping and these were  
1915 first responders who were going door-to-door to try and save

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1916 people's lives because they had no communication system

1917 whatsoever.

1918 Now, we have a problem in -- it is an ambiguity, actually,  
1919 in Federal law relative to what States can and cannot do. And  
1920 I thank you for your support of the WIRED Act. It is very  
1921 important.

1922 Mr. Gerst, I know that CTIA hasn't -- doesn't have any  
1923 position on this but I ask you to really take a hard look at the  
1924 legislation. And the reason I am asking you to is rather obvious.

1925 You used the word resiliency -- I tried counting and then I lost  
1926 count but that is an operational word. And if States cannot have  
1927 a say in setting resiliency, sometimes it happens, a lot of times  
1928 it doesn't and we have to clear the weeds out of this. States  
1929 should have a hand in that and really, that is what the legislation  
1930 does. So, I appreciate the work that CTIA is doing.

1931 Mr. Torres, you gave beautiful and profoundly sad testimony.

1932 What I would like to ask you is if there is one thing that you  
1933 want us to do, what is it?

1934 Mr. Torres. It is for this committee to use its oversight  
1935 powers.

1936 Ms. Eshoo. But for what? What item is the top thing for  
1937 you being at the bench today?

1938 Mr. Torres. I was advocating a couple things. One,

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1939 advocate Puerto Ricans. Just, we want to know why. So just if  
1940 we know what happened --

1941 Ms. Eshoo. Well, I think that there should be a letter  
1942 circulated to all members of this subcommittee, signed by everyone  
1943 on a bipartisan basis, to make sure that what is needed there,  
1944 and the assessment that is not public be made public.

1945 Mr. Torres. Well I think, as I mentioned before, the fact  
1946 that it has been mentioned already, I believe it is 60 percent  
1947 of households are wireless only and it is only going up, right?

1948 But yet, according to GAO, the length of outages from 2009 to  
1949 2016 has doubled when it comes to wireless, right? And so the  
1950 fact that this is a growing problem.

1951 And so it is a fact that there is DIRS, right, to make sure  
1952 it is mandatory, but also the Wireless Resiliency Framework.  
1953 It is just we don't believe it should be voluntary. And so there  
1954 has to be oversight to make sure that first responders -- first  
1955 of all, that the networks are resilient but then first responders  
1956 are actually and other folks are able to respond to disasters.

1957 So it should not be voluntary.

1958 Ms. Eshoo. Thank you very much.

1959 Mr. Doyle. The gentlelady's time has expired.

1960 Ms. Eshoo. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1961 Mr. Doyle. Thank you.



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1962 Mr. Walden, welcome back. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

1963 Mr. Walden. Thank you. I was downstairs at the other  
1964 hearing.

1965 So, I appreciate all your testimony and the comments. I  
1966 know you have covered most of the ground.

1967 I think back in my own experience and, again, in small market  
1968 radio, and covering fires, and seeing some of these disasters.

1969 And you know I have had -- I had five transmitters. I had three  
1970 antenna sites. I had some that were under threat of fire that  
1971 were up on top of a ridge top. And I am trying to be balanced  
1972 here in saying how do you -- how do we mandate a resilient network  
1973 in the face of a conflagration-like tragedy? You had to deal  
1974 with it in Santa Rosa. I drove through there and I mean it is  
1975 just it is unbelievable in Paradise and those areas, as we see  
1976 the video.

1977 And so I want to be thoughtful about this. I know as a  
1978 broadcaster we had all these interconnections. We had radio  
1979 connections to our law enforcement. We could talk. We could  
1980 listen to each other. That was one of our EAS stations. We had  
1981 backup on that. But sometimes when these disasters happen, there  
1982 is no -- I mean you are just done, right? I mean you rely on  
1983 ham radio operators. You create your own networks.

1984 But I am just curious with some of the voluntary work a couple

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1985 of you talked about. Can you speak to that a little bit more,  
1986 the things you have just announced in the last -- I guess today  
1987 maybe even, Mr. Gerst, Mr. Bell?

1988 Mr. Gerst. Thank you, Congressman and Ranking Member.  
1989 Thank you for the question. And I appreciate your experience  
1990 -- vast experience on these issues.

1991 You know with the increasing severity and intensity of these  
1992 storm events, we are constantly having to reevaluate --

1993 Mr. Walden. Right.

1994 Mr. Gerst. -- how we make our networks resilient.

1995 Mr. Walden. Right.

1996 Mr. Gerst. We have, since Superstorm Sandy, through the  
1997 Cooperative Framework, taken significant steps working amongst  
1998 competitive wireless providers, enabling them to support each  
1999 other's customers --

2000 Mr. Walden. Right. Makes sense.

2001 Mr. Gerst. -- enhancing collaboration with utilities.

2002 Mr. Walden. Right.

2003 Mr. Gerst. So yes, we are doing all these things on a  
2004 voluntary basis but, even with all those things, we do think new  
2005 tools could be helpful here. So I would like to explore that.

2006 Mr. Walden. Like what?

2007 Mr. Gerst. Well we think you know, certainly, having the

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2008 FCC set expectations at a national level, both for wireless and  
2009 having the -- and including the power industry would be helpful  
2010 because one of the things we have learned with the Framework with  
2011 all these voluntary commitments is that a lot of the folks at  
2012 the local level, and you may have experienced this, bring their  
2013 own expectations to what you are supposed to be doing in an  
2014 emergency.

2015 And by having a national framework around what we are  
2016 supposed to be doing, could help make sure that everybody knows  
2017 what wireless providers are supposed to do, what electric  
2018 providers are supposed to do and that could help to enhance the  
2019 resiliency --

2020 Mr. Walden. Yes.

2021 Mr. Gerst. -- while still giving us the flexibility to  
2022 work at the local level.

2023 Mr. Walden. All right, Mr. Bell.

2024 Mr. Bell. Currently in FEMA you know there are the emergency  
2025 support functions, each one. And if you were to look up or Google  
2026 you know best practices in disaster recovery, you would find  
2027 volumes of information of best practices that are out there.

2028 I think what we need to improve on is the communication  
2029 industry has their volumes and the electric industry has their  
2030 volumes. And as the two industries get more and more intertwined,

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2031 there has to be a whole lot more communication between the two.

2032 And I think that is what this will provide the opportunity to  
2033 do is to start making sure that we are --

2034 Mr. Walden. You are talking to each other and have a common  
2035 plan.

2036 Mr. Bell. Absolutely. We are not working in silos.

2037 Mr. Walden. Yes, that is important.

2038 I know I have heard over the years there were some people  
2039 that thought you ought to have a generator and a propane tank  
2040 at every cell site. Is that practical?

2041 Mr. Bell. It is not practical but I will tell you that --

2042 Mr. Walden. Should we mandate it?

2043 Mr. Bell. We are one of the few utilities in the country  
2044 that actually has our own telecom provider. And it is for that  
2045 very reason we want to be able to know that they will be there  
2046 when we have a problem. And they proved their worth in Hurricane  
2047 Katrina and Hurricane Michael. We were able to use them  
2048 throughout the storm and they do have backup generators.

2049 Mr. Walden. At every site?

2050 Mr. Bell. It is expensive -- yes.

2051 Mr. Walden. Mr. Gerst?

2052 Mr. Gerst. Sure, Congressman. You know backup power is  
2053 a great tool in the toolbox for resiliency.

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2054 Mr. Walden. Right.

2055 Mr. Gerst. But we have hundreds of thousands of cell sites  
2056 so we have to look at it on an individual case-by-case basis.

2057 We have got huge boomer towers out there, just like yours --

2058 Mr. Walden. Yes.

2059 Mr. Gerst. -- and we have got towers and antennas on the  
2060 sides of buildings. And we are going to need hundreds of  
2061 thousands of more sites for 5G that is going to be coming. In  
2062 each one of those cell sites, we have to consider what the backup  
2063 power solution is going to be because we are so dependent on power.

2064 And that includes -- you know these are batteries that are the  
2065 size of cabinets, you know generators the size of trucks, right,  
2066 and we have to consider space, noise, local regulations, and air  
2067 quality requirements, even in the type of fuel that we are using  
2068 --

2069 Mr. Walden. Right.

2070 Mr. Gerst. -- because we sure don't want to have the type  
2071 of fuel that would be caught up in a fire.

2072 Mr. Walden. Right, explosive. Right.

2073 Mr. Gerst. So it is a big challenge but a reasonable and  
2074 flexible approach we think would be helpful here.

2075 Mr. Walden. All right. Thank you very much.

2076 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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2077 Mr. Doyle. Sure.

2078 The chair recognizes Ms. Matsui for 5 minutes.

2079 Ms. Matsui. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to  
2080 thank the witnesses for being here today for this very important  
2081 hearing.

2082 The Federal Communications Commission, the FCC, has an  
2083 obligation to assist State and local governments to prepare for,  
2084 respond to, and learn from disasters. However, the Agency's  
2085 response to significant emergencies has been inconsistent. As  
2086 the number and severity of natural disasters increases, it is  
2087 critical that the FCC responds adequately and swiftly.

2088 My Emergency Reporting Act would require the FCC to  
2089 standardized its emergency response by conducting field hearings,  
2090 issuing reports, and making policy recommendations whenever  
2091 disasters strike. Our current approach of relying on Members  
2092 of Congress to call on the FCC to act is no longer sustainable.

2093 We need to set a baseline level of responsiveness to ensure local  
2094 officials have the support they need to secure our communication  
2095 networks in the face of rapidly changing climate.

2096 Mr. Torres, can you describe the shortcomings of the FCC's  
2097 existing emergency reporting structure and how standardizing the  
2098 Agency's emergency response approach might improve network  
2099 resiliency?

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2100 Mr. Torres. Yes, as I mentioned already before, that there  
2101 isn't -- one example, again, Puerto Rico, it wasn't coming fast  
2102 enough. The information that the first responders needed didn't  
2103 come fast enough.

2104 And it is critically important because, as I failed to  
2105 mention when the Congresswoman Eshoo was here, that currently  
2106 the FCC, there is no -- they have no measurements. The wireless  
2107 resiliency network doesn't have any way to measure the metric  
2108 of whether the Framework is going to work.

2109 Ms. Matsui. Absolutely.

2110 Well, when conducting field hearings, my bill requires the  
2111 FCC to not only consider consulting public safety experts,  
2112 academics, and industry representatives but, also, individuals  
2113 affected by the emergency.

2114 Why is this perspective necessary to truly understand the  
2115 full impact of the disaster?

2116 Mr. Torres. It is important to hear from people on the  
2117 ground because you get a perspective on what the needs are of  
2118 everyday people, particularly as we -- more folks are wireless  
2119 only. There is a sense of urgency that is needed in order to  
2120 respond to disasters that are happening all the time.

2121 Ms. Matsui. Right.

2122 Mr. Torres. And more importantly, it is going to inform

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2123 -- it is going to help to inform policy going forward. It is  
2124 critical. It is critical that we have them.

2125 Ms. Matsui. Sure. Okay, my Emergency Reporting Act would  
2126 also require the FCC to initiative a rulemaking to develop  
2127 improved standards requiring communication network operators to  
2128 notify 9-1-1 centers when they are experiencing outages that  
2129 prevent consumers from completing 9-1-1 calls or when emergency  
2130 calls do not include vital information like location or number  
2131 data.

2132 Mr. Henry, have you heard of instances in which consumers'  
2133 9-1-1 calls do not include location or number data and what  
2134 challenges do 9-1-1 centers have -- face in dispatching help in  
2135 these cases?

2136 Mr. Henry. Sure and thank you for the question.

2137 Outages or outages in either any, or a location, or a phone  
2138 number delivered to a PSAP are common enough that you can speak  
2139 to almost any telecommunicator and they will tell you about an  
2140 experience --

2141 Ms. Matsui. Okay.

2142 Mr. Henry. -- with that, where there is no call-back number  
2143 or there is no location.

2144 If there is no location, then the call taker must hope that  
2145 the person calling 9-1-1 is able to communicate verbally their



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2146 location, which means that they both have to know their location  
2147 and they have to be able to speak.

2148 Ms. Matsui. Okay. And Chief Gossner, I imagine the Santa  
2149 Rosa Fire Department experience situations in which limited  
2150 information of a resident's 9-1-1 call has prevented effective  
2151 response. Is that correct?

2152 Mr. Gossner. That is correct.

2153 Ms. Matsui. Okay. While the FCC has notification  
2154 obligations for network outages, the threshold remains high and  
2155 9-1-1 centers are often left in the dark about service outages  
2156 in their territory, jeopardizing public safety.

2157 Mr. Henry, do you believe a more effective network outage  
2158 notification threshold would help improve the flow of information  
2159 to 9-1-1 centers?

2160 Mr. Henry. Absolutely, 9-1-1 and all of public safety would  
2161 benefit greatly from network outage reports that are better  
2162 tailored to their needs.

2163 Ms. Matsui. Okay. I recently sent a letter to Chairman  
2164 Pai, urging him to include wildfire-specific recommendations in  
2165 the Wireless Resiliency Framework. While the FCC has solicited  
2166 comments on improving the Framework in the context of hurricanes,  
2167 Chairman Pai would not commit at our oversight hearing to doing  
2168 the same for wildfires.

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2169 I am glad to see the RESILIENT Networks Act, introduced by  
2170 Chairman Pallone and Representative McNerney, takes steps to  
2171 mandate elements of the Framework. In addition, I believe there  
2172 is an opportunity to require the FCC to finish long overdue efforts  
2173 to modernize the Framework, including recommendations specific  
2174 to wildfires and other disasters.

2175 Mr. Torres and Chief Gossner, do you believe that  
2176 wildfire-specific recommendations would help local responders  
2177 better prepare for communications outages associated with  
2178 wildfires? A yes or no, please.

2179 Mr. Torres. Yes.

2180 Mr. Gossner. Yes.

2181 Ms. Matsui. Okay, fine.

2182 Thank you and I yield back my time.

2183 Mr. Doyle. The gentlelady yields back.

2184 The chair now recognizes Mr. Walberg for 5 minutes.

2185 Mr. Walberg. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the  
2186 panel for being here.

2187 Representing Michigan's Energy District, I appreciate the  
2188 fact and am proud, at times, when I have seen consumers' energy  
2189 trucks, and crews, and DTE heading south and east during disaster  
2190 situations to provide mutual aid and knowing the fact that, as  
2191 that develops, if there ever is an emergency, a national disaster

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2192 in Michigan, which we think of as a place that is heaven all year  
2193 round, great weather wherever you find it, that the industry is  
2194 growing in their understanding of working together to improve  
2195 coordination.

2196 Mr. Bell, can you describe for us today some of the  
2197 multi-stakeholder groups that electric utilities and  
2198 communications providers participate in to develop best practices  
2199 to reduce or eliminate outages?

2200 Mr. Bell. Well, obviously, there is the BDAC. We have  
2201 addressed that already. They are specifically addressing that  
2202 very issue and there are multiple stakeholders in there.

2203 In Georgia, there is a group called the Georgia Utility  
2204 Coordinating Council. It is made up of all utilities and their  
2205 main focus is how utilities can best work on the right-of-way,  
2206 whether it be constructability or damage prevention. And then  
2207 of course, there is Georgia 8-1-1, that is made up of multiple  
2208 utilities, including both electric and communication that is  
2209 specifically focused on damage prevention, whether it be in normal  
2210 construction or you know what is referred to as extraordinary  
2211 circumstances, when a hurricane occurs.

2212 So and Georgia has those, as well as most States around the  
2213 country have some sort of collaboration, where the focus is how  
2214 can the utilities work together you know to have both a safe and

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2215 reliable infrastructure.

2216 Mr. Walberg. And this information is passed on aggressively  
2217 to other parts of the country as well?

2218 Mr. Bell. Yes, there is a lot of sharing, best practice  
2219 sharing through different organizations. You know the Common  
2220 Ground Alliance will have a conference in a couple weeks out in  
2221 California and most of the -- just all the States, including Canada  
2222 and Australia will be represented out there. The very purpose  
2223 is to share best practices on that type of information.

2224 Mr. Walberg. Mr. Gerst, do you have anything to add to that?

2225 Mr. Gerst. Thank you for the question, Congressman.

2226 Yes, Mr. Bell is right that there are places where there  
2227 is best practices being developed and shared, and we rely on them  
2228 extensively, and but we -- given the experiences we have had,  
2229 particularly in Hurricane Michael in that race to restore service,  
2230 where we were tripping over each other trying to get power and  
2231 wireless services up, or even in the recent events in California,  
2232 we recognized that we need to do something a little bit different  
2233 now. And that is why we have announced this effort with the Edison  
2234 Electric Institute, where we are going to, for the first time,  
2235 bring leaders in our member companies together. That is not  
2236 something that has happened before in that way, the way that we  
2237 are talking about, and we are going to try to identify some

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2238 near-term actions. That may yield best practices but at least  
2239 establishing those lines of communication are going to be helpful.

2240 But ultimately, we may need even further more tools. We  
2241 don't yet know exactly how those will work out but we do expect  
2242 that you know making sure that we have lines of communication  
2243 that folks in the state and local level know what resources are  
2244 available and it is consistent in terms of resiliency is going  
2245 to be very helpful.

2246 Mr. Walberg. Okay.

2247 Mr. Gerst, I understand the FCC's rules currently prescribed  
2248 -- prescribe an aging process for numbers that would provide a  
2249 grace period for customers affected by wildfires or other  
2250 disasters.

2251 Rather than drastically reinvent the system under the PHONE  
2252 Act, are there ways that the FCC could modify its existing rules  
2253 that would make sure that residential subscribers who have been  
2254 displaced by natural disaster would not lose their landline  
2255 telephone number that was assigned to them?

2256 Mr. Gerst. Congressman, thank you for the question because,  
2257 in an emergency, we know that people reach for wireless device  
2258 and that is the first thing, one of the first things they grab  
2259 when they leave their house to evacuate. And the benefits of  
2260 mobile wireless is that they can take both their service and their

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2261 telephone number with them. So this isn't really an issue  
2262 affecting the wireless industry or wireless consumers.

2263 The FCC has very robust policies in place to make sure we  
2264 don't exhaust the pool of telephone numbers that we have and how  
2265 we allocate them. And it also enables competition by making sure  
2266 that folks aren't hoarding numbers in a way. So this is something  
2267 that we would be happy to work on and work with your office on.

2268 Mr. Walberg. Thank you. I yield back.

2269 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

2270 The chair now recognizes Mr. Soto for 5 minutes.

2271 Mr. Soto. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2272 When Hurricane Michael hit Florida, that very next day I  
2273 had contacted one of my colleagues, Congressman Dunn, who  
2274 represents the Big Bend area, via text to assure him that our  
2275 staff would help him with any casework that would come up because  
2276 his office was inundated. He received that text about 3 months  
2277 later, unfortunately. And we were able to get a hold of him  
2278 because of a satellite phone a few days later. But it shows that  
2279 cell phone service can interrupt just basic interactions between  
2280 offices as we are dealing with these issues.

2281 In Puerto Rico, it was even worse after Hurricane Maria and  
2282 Hurricane Irma. We had mayors given sat phones that didn't work.

2283 They were required to fill out applications on the internet for

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2284 FEMA relief and had no internet. And it went on for months and  
2285 months. It was just dumbfounding that that could still happen  
2286 nowadays but it really alerted me to the fact that we have a  
2287 resiliency issue that we need to work together on to fix.

2288 I wanted to start with Mr. Gerst and Mr. Torres. Issues  
2289 like are addressed in the WIRED Act and the READI Act, will those  
2290 help us avoid situations of breakdowns like we saw in Puerto Rico  
2291 and Florida with regard to cell phone service or communications?

2292 And I will start with you, Mr. Gerst, and then go to Mr.  
2293 Torres.

2294 Mr. Gerst. Congressman, thank you for the question.

2295 The events of Hurricane Maria were devastating for everyone.

2296 As I noted before, our member companies had to go to considerable  
2297 lengths just to restore services. It took months to get back  
2298 to some level of normalcy. It took some of our member companies  
2299 working directly with the local governments to try to get  
2300 resources in. In fact, at one point, one of our member company's  
2301 generator was powering the airport to actually just get supplies  
2302 into the Island.

2303 We do think that our member companies have invested in Puerto  
2304 Rico to make it stronger and that was evidenced last month, when  
2305 the earthquake hit, knocking out power across the Island, 68  
2306 percent of the cell sites stood up. And the reason they were

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2307 up is because we are invested in steel poles and we are invested  
2308 in diverse backup power solutions.

2309 So we do think that there is more that we can do to try to  
2310 work together to invest in both Puerto Rico and to address some  
2311 of the challenges we saw in Hurricane Michael, where we were all  
2312 racing to try to restore service between utilities and wireless,  
2313 and we need to enhance our coordination capability.

2314 One of the things that we appreciate about the RESILIENT  
2315 Networks Act is that it does focus on collaboration as one of  
2316 its primary goals to try to bring its stakeholders together at  
2317 the national level. And so we do think that that could be very  
2318 helpful.

2319 Mr. Soto. And we do understand it is not your burden to  
2320 bear alone, which is why we have these bills together to try to  
2321 help out.

2322 Mr. Torres, it would be great to hear from you about how  
2323 critical the WIRED Act, the READI Act, and other legislation  
2324 before us is to help --

2325 Mr. Torres. We support both Acts. We believe they will  
2326 help. We also support the RESILIENCE Act. But for us, there  
2327 has to be more. More needs to be done.

2328 As I mentioned before, the Wireless Framework is only a  
2329 couple of years old, right, and it is voluntary. We already have



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2330 folks from FEMA saying, testifying that it is too slow. And so  
2331 what we need, as I mentioned in my testimony with Puerto Rico,  
2332 we need to know what happened. I am hearing the CTIA saying the  
2333 improvements they have made. We don't know what -- if the  
2334 improvements were made. We don't know. We have to take it from  
2335 the word of industry. We don't have any official Government  
2336 report. So we need reporting to know what happened and make sure  
2337 that, as Commissioner Rosenworcel said: Is the money being spent  
2338 to address the actual situations?

2339 Mr. Soto. And I think the reporting is very important and  
2340 I think you will get a lot of common ground.

2341 I wanted to turn to Mr. Bell, our neighbors to the north  
2342 in Georgia, which you rarely probably hear. What gaps did you  
2343 see when Hurricane Michael both hit our State and your State and  
2344 what can we do to help?

2345 Mr. Bell. I think it is the first time we realized or the  
2346 first major storm we had, where communication and the electric  
2347 industry had -- were as intertwined as they are.

2348 There was a lot of confusion in the beginning about fiber  
2349 cuts and that is because, on a normal storm, a Category 1 storm,  
2350 it is electric tree crews that are out there clearing the trees  
2351 and the debris. But when you have a storm the magnitude of  
2352 Michael, it is not us. It is local government and the DOT that

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2353 is clearing the roads.

2354 And so the assumption was the electric utilities were cutting  
2355 fiber and that wasn't the case but no one was talking to the DOT  
2356 and the local governments any critical fiber. There was a  
2357 communication between the electric and the communications.

2358 So it is something I think we all learned from that and will  
2359 use moving forward, for sure.

2360 Mr. Soto. Okay, thank you. My time has expired.

2361 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman's time has expired.

2362 Mr. Bilirakis, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

2363 Mr. Bilirakis. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it.

2364 Mr. Gerst, there is an increasing prevalent problem with  
2365 the use of contraband cell phones in prisons with intent to commit  
2366 crimes behind bars. I worked on this issue in the Florida  
2367 legislature as well. Even though they are prisoners, there are  
2368 many cases where public safety is truly at risk, such as crimes  
2369 aiding in physical and sexual violence against the public.

2370 Can you discuss what steps the wireless industry has taken  
2371 to help address this problem and what challenges exist to crack  
2372 down on this contraband?

2373 Mr. Gerst. Congressman, thank you for your question and  
2374 thank you for your leadership and attention to this very important  
2375 issue.

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2376           You know we don't want our wireless devices to be misused,  
2377           in the way that you are being described, and so we have fully  
2378           embraced working directly with State Departments of Corrections,  
2379           working with the Bureau of Prisons, working with the FCC to find  
2380           solutions to this growing problem.

2381           There is no one way to solve this issue. It takes a mix  
2382           of technology and processes to address the issue. We have  
2383           actually worked and tested various solutions that could help the  
2384           State officials identify where these devices are used and then  
2385           help us to stop them but we probably need some more teeth to really  
2386           make it a deterrent for the use of these contraband devices.

2387           And so we do think that, for example, putting the FCC as  
2388           the cop on the beat to do something there could be helpful but  
2389           we certainly appreciate your leadership and attention to this  
2390           issue.

2391           Mr. Bilirakis. And again, I am willing to sit down again  
2392           with you, and all of you, to find a solution to this problem because  
2393           we are going to file some legislation. So any input you have,  
2394           please don't hesitate.

2395           And then you know, again, I would like your support on these  
2396           issues but, of course, you have to look at the final draft before  
2397           you make a decision.

2398           In closing, I want to highlight the importance of the

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2399 McNerney-Bilirakis READI Act to the people of my district, on  
2400 the coast into Florida. Actually, I am in the Tampa Bay area,  
2401 the coastal area of Tampa Bay. This bill can save lives by  
2402 ensuring FEMA emergency messages get to at-risk people during  
2403 a hurricane or flood. And I thank the chairman for the READI  
2404 Act inclusion at this legislative hearing.

2405           And if anyone would like to comment on that particular piece  
2406 of legislation, I would be happy to listen. Mr. Gerst.  
2407 Again, Congressman, thank you very much for your leadership and  
2408 your support of that bill.

2409           From our perspective, wireless emergency alerts have quickly  
2410 become one of the most effective alerting tools in the country,  
2411 and we need to ensure that consumers continue to trust the  
2412 information that they are getting from the wireless emergency  
2413 alerts, and make sure that alert originators, who send the alerts  
2414 to warn us to get us to evacuate from these areas, have the tools  
2415 and the training that they need to be able to use it most  
2416 effectively.

2417           The READI Act can help do that by encouraging alert  
2418 originators to develop best practices, to avoid false alerts,  
2419 to harness the new capabilities we just rolled out in wireless  
2420 emergency alerts. As Chief Gossner mentioned, there is all new  
2421 capabilities that just came online last year, thanks to hard work

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2422 from the FCC, from the wireless industry, and from FEMA. And  
2423 so we are looking forward to continuing to improve and keep  
2424 wireless emergency alerts a trusted source.

2425 Mr. Bilirakis. I appreciate it very much.

2426 And anyone else? I don't have much time. Anyone else?

2427 Well, thank you very much and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

2428 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

2429 The chair recognizes Mr. Cardenas for 5 minutes.

2430 Mr. Cardenas. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I  
2431 appreciate this opportunity for us to have this public hearing  
2432 so that the public can understand a little bit more as to why  
2433 all of these issues are so important to individuals and family  
2434 members across our country.

2435 First, I want to thank you, Mr. Gossner, and all of you for  
2436 your expertise, but Mr. Gossner and thousands of firefighters  
2437 and first responders in California and across the country who  
2438 are on the front lines every day, risking their lives to protect  
2439 everybody from devastating fires and other disasters.

2440 I am glad we have an opportunity today to discuss the  
2441 importance of technology in wireless communications in  
2442 emergencies and natural disasters, and also to explore ways to  
2443 strengthen America's telecommunications infrastructure to ensure  
2444 public safety.

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2445           Last year, during its 7,860 wildfires, California  
2446           experienced significant cell phone service interruptions during  
2447           these disasters. In one county, over half of the 280 cell phone  
2448           tower sites lost service, as well as some landlines experienced  
2449           connectivity failures. These fires threaten not only American  
2450           lives but homes, businesses, and wildlife. As climate change  
2451           worsens, these wildfires will only continue to grow in intensity,  
2452           frequency, and ferocity, as they have in recent years. We need  
2453           to bolster our telecommunications infrastructure to ensure their  
2454           resiliency during emergencies.

2455           I welcome today's thoughtful discussion and my first  
2456           question is to you, Mr. Gossner. For many of us, it is obvious  
2457           why we want to be able to communicate during a natural disaster  
2458           but I worry that some don't necessarily understand the importance  
2459           of doing all we can to keep our networks up and running.

2460           Can you explain a little more about why it is so vital for  
2461           public safety officials to be able to communicate with the public  
2462           during a natural disaster?

2463           Mr. Gossner. Sure. Thank you for the question.

2464           It is imperative that we build a system that is resilient  
2465           enough that can withstand a certain amount of damage so, when  
2466           that emergency is starting to unfold, we are able to communicate  
2467           with the public and give them the information that they need to

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2468 either evacuate, or shelter in place, or whatever it may be.

2469 There are times when it is community members talking to  
2470 community members through different social media platforms.

2471 Those go down as well.

2472 It really gives us the ability to notify folks that there  
2473 is impending danger. And that is really what this is. We will  
2474 never be able to build a system that stays 100 percent all the  
2475 time. I don't think that is what we are asking. But we need  
2476 to build some resiliency, some capacity that those towers will  
2477 last for enough time to notify the folks that we need to notify  
2478 to get out of harm's way. And that is really what we are looking  
2479 for is to build in that resiliency so we can make those  
2480 notifications.

2481 Mr. Cardenas. And there are various ways to do that,  
2482 correct, I am sure. To the general public, redundancy sounds  
2483 redundant. It sounds like who would want to be involved in  
2484 redundancy, that is the dumbest thing I have ever heard. But  
2485 when it comes to issues like this, isn't redundancy something  
2486 that is critical to making sure that, when something bad happens,  
2487 there are alternative routes or alternative opportunities to make  
2488 sure that people can still communicate?

2489 Mr. Gossner. Yes, so for me, it is not only redundancy but  
2490 it is hardening the entire network. You have got bare cables

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2491 doing up into a framework of a tower. Insulate those in the  
2492 Wildland Urban Interface so that they can withstand some heat.

2493 Simple things -- I think are simple. Maybe they are not  
2494 so simple but they seem reasonable. And like I say, we are not  
2495 going to build something that is going to last forever but we  
2496 need to be able to provide assurance to the community that we  
2497 can get them the alerts that they need to get out of harm's way.

2498 Mr. Cardenas. Can you briefly discuss what it was like for  
2499 residents in Santa Rosa who were without phone or internet service  
2500 during the wildfires that devastated their community?

2501 Mr. Gossner. Yes, it was complete pandemonium. You know  
2502 it ranged from all of the emotions you can expect. And not only  
2503 could we not communicate, that meant we had to go in there and  
2504 knock on doors, and use sirens, and get everyone out, and then  
2505 you had to get everyone out while the fire was chasing you through  
2506 the community.

2507 So when you lose connectivity during -- this is a no-notice  
2508 event, which is different than a hurricane. We all kind of know  
2509 when a hurricane is coming, for the most part, so you can prepare  
2510 a little bit differently. But this is one of those no-notice  
2511 events that is very impactful to the community and public safety  
2512 when it is happening in your neighborhood. And it is happening  
2513 up and down the State, as we have witnessed since -- for a long



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2514 time, right?

2515 So I go back to the Valley Fire in 2015 in Lake County and,  
2516 from that, you can name -- tick off the fires in the State of  
2517 California, both northern and southern.

2518 Mr. Cardenas. The responsible thing for us to do as  
2519 Congress, in my opinion, is to make sure that the RESILIENT  
2520 Networks Act actually gets through the process and signed into  
2521 law so that locals can actually reap the benefits of this important  
2522 legislation.

2523 I yield back. Thank you.

2524 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

2525 The chair now recognizes Mr. Gianforte for 5 minutes.

2526 Mr. Gianforte. Thank you Chairman Doyle. I especially  
2527 want to thank you for including H.R. 4194, the National Suicide  
2528 Hotline Designation Act of 2019 in today's hearing. This is a  
2529 critical piece of legislation that can help Americans facing a  
2530 crisis.

2531 Our Nation truly faces an epidemic of suicide and Montanans,  
2532 tragically, are all too familiar with it. Montana has the highest  
2533 suicide rate in the nation. Unfortunately, mental health care  
2534 is not available to many Montanans. In fact, more than 600,000  
2535 Montanans live in an area where there is a shortage of mental  
2536 health professionals.

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2537           Last year, I held two mental health and substance abuse  
2538 roundtables in Montana. Providers and experts described the need  
2539 for more resources to address mental health care and prevent  
2540 suicide. We need a multipronged approach to combat this tragic  
2541 situation.

2542           Ideally, everyone would have access to preventive mental  
2543 health care. Folks who live in rural and frontier communities  
2544 face overwhelming obstacles to receive mental health care. That  
2545 is why the 9-8-8 is so important.

2546           The goal of the National Suicide Hotline is to ensure people  
2547 know about and have access to the services they need in the face  
2548 of a crisis. Our bill provides this essential service for anyone  
2549 facing a mental health crisis and helps our communities grow  
2550 healthier and stronger.

2551           In addition to this bill, I have also introduced a bill with  
2552 Representative Beyer to conduct a national suicide prevention  
2553 campaign. We need to ensure that those struggling with  
2554 depression, anxiety disorders, and other mental illness don't  
2555 feel stigmatized. Everyone needs to know that it is okay to ask  
2556 for help and, in the case of an emergency, where they can find  
2557 it.

2558           I thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this  
2559 important piece of legislation and I look forward to seeing the

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2560 National Suicide Hotline Designation Act signed into law.

2561 And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

2562 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman yields back.

2563 The committee now welcomes one of our most esteemed members  
2564 of the full committee to the subcommittee. Mr.  
2565 Engel, you have 5 minutes.

2566 Mr. Engel. Thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.  
2567 Thank you for the opportunity to participate.

2568 I want to speak about an issue of critical importance that  
2569 has flown under the radar for quite some time, which is the  
2570 preservation of a lifesaving radio spectrum known as the T-Band.

2571 For decades, the T-Band has supported vital public safety radio  
2572 communications among our first responders. It allows police,  
2573 firefighters, and EMS providers to communicate even when cell  
2574 towers, electricity, or the internet are down. It functions deep  
2575 underground in tunnels and inside concrete buildings.

2576 But now, thanks to a provision of law passed back in 2012,  
2577 the FCC is required to relocate an auction the T-Band spectrum  
2578 for use by the private sector in 2021. This would endanger  
2579 crucial public safety communications, where in my district in  
2580 Bronx, New York, and Westchester, New York, as well as in major  
2581 metropolitan areas across the United States.

2582 It would also force police, firefighters, and EMS providers

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2583 to spend billions of dollars, change their systems, and buy new  
2584 equipment.

2585 According to the National Public Safety Telecommunications  
2586 Council and the GAO, roughly \$6 billion would be needed to relocate  
2587 public safety users off the T-Band. The cost to the New York  
2588 area alone would be \$1.4 billion.

2589 In December 2019, FCC Chairman Pai underscored the  
2590 importance of this issue by writing, and I quote him: The Agency  
2591 has extensively analyzed the T-Band and concluded that moving  
2592 forward is not viable. I am calling on Congress to repeal the  
2593 T-Band mandate. I am hoping that Congress can resolve this matter  
2594 without delay. Unquote.

2595 The GAO agreed, reporting to Congress that the T-Band mandate  
2596 is unworkable and could deprive first responders of their current  
2597 ability to communicate by radio.

2598 The urgent need to address the issue is clear. To further  
2599 emphasize the point, I would like to submit some letters to the  
2600 record, including a letter dated December 9, 2019 from the  
2601 International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International  
2602 Association of Firefighters, the National Sheriffs Association,  
2603 the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National  
2604 Public Safety Telecommunications Council, the Greater Boston  
2605 Police Council, the Los Angeles Regional Interoperable

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2606 Communications System, and others; a letter dated November 13,  
2607 2019 from the New York State County Executives Association; a  
2608 letter dated October 8, 2019 from the New York State Association  
2609 of Counties; a letter dated August 2, 2019 from the Police  
2610 Commissioner of the City of New York; a letter dated July 2019  
2611 from public safety officials in Harris County, Texas; and a letter  
2612 dated June 24, 2019 from the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the  
2613 National League of Cities. I have more letters but I will stop  
2614 for now.

2615 To resolve this issue, I introduced the bipartisan Don't  
2616 Break Up the T-Band Act. My legislation would repeal the 2012  
2617 provision of law that is at the heart of this problem and would  
2618 allow law enforcement, fire officials, and EMS providers to  
2619 continue using the T-Band spectrum to operate their radios for  
2620 day-to-day lifesaving operations.

2621 Mr. Chairman, for including my legislation in this hearing.

2622 I understand that our ranking member, Mr. Walden, has also  
2623 introduced legislation, the FIRST RESPONDER Act, to address this  
2624 issue. I look forward to working with Mr. Walden and the rest  
2625 of our colleagues on the Energy and Commerce Committee to  
2626 harmonize our legislation and resolve this issue.

2627 Today's hearing also includes other bills that are of  
2628 critical importance to improve communication networks in times

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2629 of emergency. Included among them is the RESILIENT Networks Act,  
2630 which picks up where the SANDy Act left off, and will ensure that  
2631 communications networks are prepared for the worst.

2632 Let me ask Mr. Gerst. Let me ask you this question. My  
2633 city was New York City. It was devastated by Superstorm Sandy.

2634 The destruction was immeasurable. Can you tell me what lessons  
2635 the wireless industry learned from the storm and whether we are  
2636 better prepared today than we were back in 2012? In your view,  
2637 will legislation in front of our subcommittee today help prepare  
2638 us for future storms and rising seas?

2639 Mr. Gerst. Congressman, thank you so much for the question.

2640 Yes, Superstorm Sandy was sort of a touchdown moment for  
2641 our industry and led to the development of the Wireless Resiliency  
2642 Cooperative Framework, including through the leadership of  
2643 Chairman Pallone. That Framework, its pillars were increasing  
2644 coordination and collaboration between wireless providers who  
2645 were competitive but they have done things since Superstorm Sandy  
2646 like sharing resources, repairing each other's towers, making  
2647 sure each other's customers can use service on each other's  
2648 networks.

2649 We have also increased local coordination through new best  
2650 practices from the local governments and we have enhanced our  
2651 consumer education tools all under the Framework because of

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2652 Superstorm Sandy.

2653 In my testimony, I go through a number of different examples  
2654 of how we think our networks are stronger and we know that there  
2655 is more that can be done. That is why we are supporting the goals  
2656 of the RESILIENT Networks Act. It has some of the very similar  
2657 pillars as our Framework. It has enhanced collaboration and  
2658 coordination. It has making sure that wireless providers are  
2659 using -- have reasonable and flexible expectations around  
2660 roaming, mutual aid, and backup power, and it is forward-looking  
2661 in terms of how can 5G advance resiliency.

2662 So we are making steady improvements on resiliency in the  
2663 wake of Superstorm Sandy.

2664 Mr. Doyle. The gentleman's time has expired.

2665 Mr. Engel. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2666 Mr. Doyle. The chair requests unanimous consent to enter  
2667 the following into the record: A letter from APCO; a letter from  
2668 Craig Fugate, former FEMA Administrator; a letter from IAFF; a  
2669 letter from Mental Health Liaison Group; a letter from NAB; a  
2670 letter from the National League of Cities; a letter from U.S.  
2671 Telecom; a letter from Reps Moulton and Stewart on H.R. 4194;  
2672 a Chairman Pallone letter to the GAO about the 2017 hurricane  
2673 season.

2674 Without objection, so ordered.

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2675 [The information follows:]

2676

2677 \*\*\*\*\*COMMITTEE INSERT\*\*\*\*\*



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2678           Mr. Doyle. I want to thank the witnesses for their  
2679 participation in today's hearing.

2680           I want to remind all members that, pursuant to committee  
2681 rules, they have 10 business days to submit additional questions  
2682 for the record to be answered by the witnesses who have appeared.

2683           And I would ask that each witness respond promptly to any such  
2684 questions that you may receive.

2685           At this time, the committee is adjourned.

2686           [Whereupon, at 12:55 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]