

# **DISPATCH**

**Monthly Magazine**

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DISPATCH Monthly Magazine

**For Immediate Release**

March 8th, 2007

**SEN. STEVENS SPEAKS ON THE 911 MODERNIZATION AMENDMENT TO S.4**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senators Ted Stevens (R-Alaska), Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Texas) and Senator Gordon Smith (R-Ore.) today introduced an amendment to upgrade the 911 system used to reach operators in an emergency to S. 4, the Improving America's Security by Implementing Unfinished Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. The amendment was originally introduced as a stand alone bill sponsored by Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) and co-sponsored by Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson (R-Texas).

Senator Stevens: 911 calls provide the first line of defense in the safety of our citizens and is critical for our public safety personnel.

Technological advances now allow 911 calls to provide more information, such as the caller's location and telephone number.

However, in too many parts of the country, the public safety community doesn't have the technology needed to receive location or other information.

They need funding to help to upgrade their equipment.

This amendment would add the 911 Modernization Act, S. 93, which passed unanimously out of the Commerce Committee several weeks ago.

This would allow the National Telecommunications and Information Administration to borrow funds (\$43.5 million) from the treasury to fund the Enhance 911 Act grant program now in advance of the spectrum auction.

Because the money is only advanced, the Congressional Budget Office has said that this amendment does not score.

The National Emergency Number Association that focuses on 911 recently announced that 80% of the country is capable of E911 capability. But that 20% of the country that cannot is rural America and it covers 50% of the counties in America.

There is a matching requirement, to ensure that the money is spent wisely by public safety entities that are committed to improving the 911 calling capability of their citizens.

The amendment has the support of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officers International and the National Emergency Numbering Association and I submit this letter from these two premier 911 public safety organizations into the record.

With this borrowing authority, NTIA could get the money out to public safety community now. The funds will be replaced, and enhanced 911 calls can begin saving lives in more of rural America.

This is absolutely essential, 50 percent of our nations counties do not have the ability to move forward. Borrowing the money now from the auction of the spectrum is the best way to proceed.

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### **SENATOR STEVENS FLOOR STATEMENT ON INTEROPERABILITY AMENDMENTS IN S. 4**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Vice Chairman Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) gave the following statement on the Senate Floor about Interoperability legislation in S. 4, the Improving America's Security Act of 2007.

Senator Stevens: Since 2001, we have heard the growing cry from public safety officials that the police, firefighters and emergency medical response personnel throughout the country need help achieving interoperability in today's communications world.

Sadly, this problem predated September 11th.

More than a decade ago the Federal Communications Commission and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration formed the Public Safety Wireless Advisory Committee to examine the communications needs of first responders and public safety officials.

That report called for more spectrum, technological solutions and more funding, and was filed 5 years to the day before the tragedy of 9/11.

It called for those improvements to save lives on a daily basis. These solutions are not just geared for the huge disasters, but are also geared for the every day tragedies that can be avoided with better communications and better interoperability.

Thanks to the work of the last Congress, public safety stands ready to finally receive the help that the FCC and NTIA called for more than 10 years ago.

Last year, the Congress set a hard date for broadcasters to turn over 24 MHz of spectrum to public safety for communications and interoperability.

Right now the FCC is examining proposals to maximize the broadband potential of that spectrum, which will bring great new services and capabilities to policemen, firefighters and other emergency personnel.

In addition, Congress created a \$1 billion interoperability grant program with the funds that will be received from auctioning off the rest of the spectrum recovered from broadcasters. That program originated out of the Senate Commerce Committee.

Additionally, at the very end of Congress, we accelerated the granting of the awards as part of the Call Home Act. Therefore, by law, the interoperability grants much be awarded by September 30, 2007. Public safety has been waiting a very long time for these funds and they finally have a date certain when the interoperability grants will be awarded.

Having worked with the FCC and NTIA over the last decade, the Senate Commerce Committee has watched as the public safety communications market has evolved and we have heard about a number of technological solutions that can address both near term and long term interoperability needs.

IP systems can be used as bridges between otherwise incompatible communications systems.

Strategic technological reserves can be created to quickly replace infrastructure that is destroyed in large scale disasters. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita demonstrated the need for portable wireless systems that are readily deployed when a disaster destroys the existing communications infrastructure.

Standards development and dedicated interoperability channels facilitate planning, and incident management between agencies.

And all of these solutions can be achieved now and are provided for by the provisions of the Commerce Committee's interoperability provisions.

Unfortunately, the Senator from Oklahoma's amendment would delay all of these solutions. That would be unfortunate for public safety and it would be very harmful to the public.

The Homeland Committee has created its own interoperability program that is separate from the Commerce's billion dollar program. However, that program is a separate one. It is focused on the long term, after additional planning is done and would still be several years away from even awarding grants, let alone implementing them.

It is time that we finally deliver on our promises to the police, firefighters and emergency medical personnel around the country and deliver the technological reserves, and the interoperable communications help that first responders need now by moving forward with the \$1 billion public safety grant program being administered by NTIA.

But, we cannot wait any longer. We cannot plan indefinitely. These solutions take time to implement. We must move forward now.

With the Commerce program, public safety will be able to move forward with real solutions and begin addressing the problems that have plagued our nation's first responders for too long.

We're able to come across some really interesting innovations too. Through the NTIA's program, it is possible to use communications concepts to bring about interoperability without a large expenditure for new equipment.

This first \$1 billion will stretch real far if it's used under the plans for the NTIA. If it is delayed, and unfortunately I think that's what the Senator from Oklahoma's amendment would do, it will really put us in a position where we cannot implement what's been done now. These people, the first responders have been planning now for three years to get this money, and it is going to be paid out this year under the program that we've already enacted into law.

I would urge my friend from Oklahoma, don't delay that \$1 billion. I understand there may be some concerns about the \$3 billion in this bill even though that is money that will be planned; it will be several years before it will be made available. The money we've got, the \$1 billion that's already provided by law is available as soon as it comes in and I think it will go a long way in meeting the immediate needs of first responders.

So I hope that the Senator will really not persevere with this amendment. I understand his concerns and we share his concerns over the use of money.

We have right now a program where the National Guard has a mobile unit that's equipped with interoperability concepts that came about through software and using the software on the vehicle, they can bring about interoperability with any system anyone uses in the first responder area today. I believe this \$1 billion with demonstrate that we can make this interoperability capability available to our first responders at a lot less money than other people believe. I think this \$1 billion is needed and will go a long way.