Prepared Remarks of FCC Commissioner
Mignon L. Clyburn

"Women in Public Safety Communications Leadership Conference"
The Association of Public Safety Communications Officials International
Orlando, FL
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Introduction

Thank you, Chris, for that gracious introduction. I am truly honored to be part of a conference that combines two of my passions: promoting public safety and empowering women. I would like to thank the organizers of this conference for highlighting the importance of both.

Women in Leadership Positions

I know you are taking full advantage of the opportunities this conference has to offer. The connections you make this week will prove as important as the information you gain during the panel sessions. By attending this conference and sharing your personal experiences, you are all improving our national public safety network.

Women face unique challenges in the workplace, but as I'm sure you've been told throughout the conference and during your personal and professional experiences, the ability to overcome those challenges is the trademark of a truly effective leader.

It is important to understand and embrace the fact that there is more than one path to becoming a leader in this industry. Each of you brings diverse styles, interests, backgrounds, experiences, approaches, skill-sets, and answers to the table. This diversity is a strength; not a weakness. Some may have concluded that because you work in a male dominated environment, you should try to blend in; be like one of the guys. There is a time and a place for collaboration, and a time and a place for fitting in. But there is also a time and a place for standing out. There is a place for diversity in the communications industry – and as a matter of fact, there's a *need*.

The more a local public safety agency reflects the diversity of its local community, the better prepared that agency is to serve the public safety needs of its citizens. Such an agency can better react to situations, and be better equipped to calm an individual who is desperate for help. There are circumstances in which a woman may not be comfortable opening up to a male 9-1-1 operator. Or, there may be callers who are less proficient in the English language. Your ability to relate to them in some way may actually mean the difference between life and death.

From managers to dispatchers, and everyone in between, all of your experiences come into play while assisting those in crisis. These experiences should be viewed not as impediments to leadership, but as enhancements.

Your diverse experiences could also be your inspiration for innovation. Actress Hedy Lamarr is best known for her work in Hollywood, but after learning about control systems for torpedoes in the 1940s, she invented what's known as frequency hopping. Fast forward to 2011. Frequency hopping is a fundamental component of dynamic use spectrum technology. This technology is viewed as one of the most important tools the industry has developed to enable our country to use spectrum more efficiently. In November 2010, the Commission adopted a Notice

of Inquiry to promote this technology, including ways that dynamic use technology can be employed to advance public safety communications.

The legacy of Hedy Lamarr's invention reaffirms that a woman can take the lead in the communications industry, and a woman can have a significant positive impact on the safety of our country. We should never lose sight of that. If you have an innovative idea, stick with it. It may take a while for others to recognize its value -- hopefully not 70 years or so -- but there is always the potential for making a lasting impact. One of the women in this room could be the next great innovator in the public safety communications arena.

Public Safety/NG 9-1-1

In addition to diversity in our public safety networks, we need to have a user friendly system in order ensure the safety of our citizens.

As I've said many times before, the safety of our citizens should be the top priority of every public servant. Coming from South Carolina, the importance of public safety hits close to home. Each year, we brace ourselves in anticipation of the start of hurricane season in June, and we breathe a sigh of relief each November as the season comes to a close. But this is only one region. I now face different challenges living in our Nation's capital.

Around the country our citizens suffer through earthquakes, tornados, blizzards, and other disasters each year. I know this is not news to you, as you are the ones responding to these situations. Nor is it news to you that our current emergency systems are in dire need of improvement. There is a gap between the technologies used by our citizens and the technologies used by our 9-1-1 services that continues to grow.

Over the past decade or so, we have seen a dramatic increase in the numbers of Americans, relying on their cell phones for their primary communications needs. A growing portion of our population has abandoned traditional wireline services, and it is estimated that 70 percent of the 9-1-1 calls made last year, were from cell phones.

Last year, APCO played an integral role in the FCC's adoption of E-9-1-1 location accuracy standards, which is the first step toward bringing our 9-1-1 services up to date. However, there is still substantial work that needs to be done. The FCC needs the continued cooperation of all stakeholders in order to deploy a Next Generation 9-1-1, or an NG9-1-1 system.

The goal of NG9-1-1 is to transition our current 9-1-1 system into a national IP-enabled emergency network. This will allow us to communicate with the public in all the same ways that they communicate with one another. Americans expect to be able to send texts, photos, and videos to their family and friends over mobile phones and other portable devices and they believe that 9-1-1 networks can handle that type of traffic today. Only after they send texts to 9-1-1 while facing an emergency do they find out that this is not the case. Very few 9-1-1 call centers have the technical capability to receive texts, photos, videos, and other data. Many 9-1-1 call centers do not even have access to broadband, which makes it difficult to receive large volumes of data. How can we expect to keep our country safe when we can't receive communications from those in need?

Mobile technology has proven to be an asset in the aftermath of natural disasters. The earthquake that devastated Haiti, last year, led to the development of a real world test bed for

several new applications, such as interactive maps and texting platforms. These applications were vital to urgent tasks, such as guiding search-and-rescue teams, locating missing persons, and delivering food and water to the populations that needed them the most.

During the more recent tragedy in Japan, several mobile wireless operators realized that so many of their country's citizens would be using text messages to communicate, that they set up disaster bulletin boards, to post text messages for others to read on the Web. Telecommunications companies sent text messages out to their customers to ask if they were okay. Google set up a Person Finder database beginning just one hour after the earthquake struck. They worked with the Japanese government and the telecommunications companies in order integrate data, and they are currently tracking about 607,000 records.

But we should not wait until after a disaster has struck to innovate. We need to learn from these occurrences, and take steps to fully prepare ourselves to respond to any future crisis. Verizon, for example, is currently developing interactive digital signs that will provide a live, two-way video session, in multiple languages, to remote video attendants all over the country. This will enable video concierge services in many industries and also provide public safety information during large scale disasters.

Massive emergencies are not the only reason the 9-1-1 system needs to be brought up to date. Over the past few years, victims of crimes have turned to text messaging to get help without putting themselves in further danger.

One example is the Virginia Tech campus tragedy in 2007, where students turned to text messages to spread news of the initial attack, and kept each other updated via text messaging as attacks continued throughout that terrible day.

Another example comes from my home state. In 2006, a 14 year-old girl was kidnapped from her school bus outside of Columbia, South Carolina. After a week of searching, the police and the girl's family finally had a break in the case. When her kidnapper fell asleep, the teen grabbed her cell phone to contact her mother. By sending a text message saying, "Hey, Mom, I'm being held in a hole," the child facilitated her own rescue. The police were able to use triangulation to locate where the message came from, and the girl was safely returned home.

Mobile technologies have also helped place people with special needs, those living with disabilities, and those who do not speak English, on equal footing in their day to day lives. It is equally important to give these citizens equal access to help in emergency situations. A Next Generation 9-1-1 service can do just that.

Both the National Broadband Plan, and the Commission's December 2010 Notice of Inquiry on the Framework for NG9-1-1 Deployment, admit that the transition to NG9-1-1, will be an evolutionary process, involving technical, economic, and institutional challenges. Funding may be the biggest challenge, but it is worth it to ensure the safety of our citizens. It won't be easy, and it will take time to roll out the national network that Congress envisions. I am confident, that our Nation can rise to meet these challenges, and implement an effective national NG9-1-1 network.

Conclusion

Thank you again for inviting me to be a part of this conference. I admire each of you for making a career in public safety communications. And by joining APCO and attending this

conference you demonstrate that you are proactive about advancing your career. I look forward to your continued hard work and support as we move towards a Next Generation 9-1-1 system.