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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

Washington, DC 20515-2401

May 16, 2011

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*PS/BB  
Pub Safety  
WTH*

Chairman Julius Genachowski  
Federal Communications Commission  
Room: 8-B201  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

Please find the attached letter from current and former public safety officials from Mississippi. I write today to respectfully request your reaction and response so that I may fully understand what the Federal Communications Commission is doing to address these issues, particularly that of device interoperability across the 700 MHz spectrum.

I have the distinct honor of representing the people of Mississippi in the United States Congress; and these issues are inherently more than about technology, policy, or what type of phone one uses. These are issues of life and death.

Since Hurricane Katrina in 2005, there has been significant progress made on deploying new and more capable communications equipment in my home state. Unfortunately, the lack of redundant networks and interoperable devices – in other words basic communications – among police, emergency management personnel, and health care providers had very specific and significant impacts on the relief and recovery for our constituents and communities. Sadly, similar issues were evident in past weeks as Mississippi was ravaged by deadly tornados.

While there has been progress, advancement in communications technology moves at an astounding pace. Public safety officials in Mississippi are dedicated servants with great responsibility for life and property. I understand their desire for access to multiple redundant 4G communications networks and devices that are interoperable across those networks.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to hearing from you regarding this inquiry. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Alan Nunnelee*

Alan Nunnelee

MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Cc:  
Commissioners Copps, Clyburn, Baker, and McDowell

**An Open Letter to Members of Congress and the Chairman and Members of the Federal Communications Commission:**

We, the undersigned current and former public safety officials in the State of Mississippi, write to highlight this critical point about public safety networks: interoperability across the 700 MHz spectrum is essential for our nation's first responders to communicate adequately in emergencies. Public safety agencies must be able to communicate with each other ("intra-operability") and also need the ability to access any compatible 4G network ("interoperability")

Without interoperability, our first responders will not have access to redundant 4G networks in an emergency and many first responders in rural areas and small towns will not have affordable access to life-saving 4G equipment. In Mississippi, our first responders know about the need for redundant networks first-hand. After Katrina, our public safety agencies were unable to use their devices in many coastal counties because the public safety networks were down and their devices were not interoperable with the available commercial networks. That should never happen again. Mississippi's first responders -- many of which are small rural agencies or all-volunteer forces -- deserve affordable access to the services available from 4G technology on reliable and redundant networks.

On a day-to-day basis, interoperability across the 700MHz spectrum will keep Americans safer by enabling first responders to access multiple redundant 4G communications networks. In many instances, commercial operators will deploy 700 MHz LTE networks much sooner than a taxpayer-funded public safety network will be deployed. With interoperability across the 700MHz spectrum, first responders could have access to 4G capabilities as soon as the first commercial network comes online in an area.<sup>1</sup> Also, should an area's public safety network become unavailable or overwhelmed due to a man-made or natural disaster, first responders would have instant access to any available commercial 700MHz network.

Today, when state and federal budgets are strained, it also important to note the benefits interoperability across the 700MHz spectrum would provide taxpayers. Interoperability across the 700MHz spectrum would allow public safety to leverage the economies of scale for the entire 4G 700 MHz ecosystem. As a result, both commercial and public safety operators would see lower device and equipment cost--increasing the speed of 4G deployments across the country. The Congressional Research Service estimates that interoperability would lower the average cost of each public safety device by \$2500 -- from \$3000 to \$500.<sup>2</sup> Not only would this lower the price taxpayers pay for first responders' critical communications equipment, but it also means that small and rural first responders would have affordable access to the same life-saving 4G devices that will be available to their counterparts in America's largest cities.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2009, the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council concluded: "A nationwide, interoperable wireless broadband network, referred to here as the National Broadband Data System (NBDS) for public safety will not be built overnight and it will take many years to even approximate ubiquitous coverage. During that period, the ability of public safety users to roam on commercial networks will be essential." See, NPSTC 700 MHz Public Safety Broadband Task Force Report and Recommendations, p. 32 (September 4, 2009) (emphasis added).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., L. Moore, "Public Safety Communications and Spectrum Resources: Policy Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service Doc. No. R40859 (September 1, 2010) ("The participation of commercial carriers in developing and deploying, for example, a common radio interface, is expected to put the costs of public safety radios in the same price range as commercial high-end devices (\$500). By contrast, interoperable radios for the narrowband networks at 700 MHz cost \$3000 and up, each.")

As you examine the communications needs of America's first-responders and encourage deployment of wireless broadband capabilities to our nation's rural communities, we urge you to take these considerations to heart. Having witnessed first-hand the dedication and fearlessness of Mississippi's many first responders, we can assure you they deserve nothing less.

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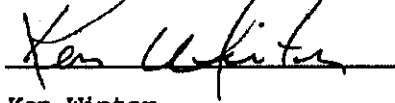
Mike Chaney  
Insurance Commissioner &  
State Fire Marshal, State of Mississippi



Stephen B. Simpson  
Former Commissioner of Public Safety,  
State of Mississippi



Rob Martin  
PRESIDENT, MS Fire Chiefs Association



Ken Winter  
Executive Director  
MS Association of Chiefs of Police