

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications, Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment*, PS Docket Nos. 11-153, 10-255, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (December 12, 2012)

The first telephone number I taught my children was 911. It is a number that every one of us knows by heart but every one of us hopes that we will never have to use. As the old saying goes, you may only call 911 once in your life, but it will be the most important call you ever make.

The challenge to the continued success of 911 has been the increasing complexity of our communications systems. Every new way of connecting creates new possibilities and new difficulties. Incorporating these new ways of reaching out into the national and local 911 framework can be an arduous process. It requires public safety organizations, carriers, and the Commission to work together. But it is worth the effort. Over time we have successfully expanded 911 service to mobile phones. We have facilitated the development of handset and network solutions for automatic location technology for wireless calls. We have made 911 an essential feature of interconnected VoIP. As a result, we are all safer when the unthinkable occurs.

Today we take steps to bring SMS texting into the 911 fold. Texting has become second nature to millions of Americans. Many of us use our phones for more texting than speaking. We use texting to reach out to friends and family, to confirm plans, to vote in contests, and to donate to charities and campaigns. Now the texting service that has become so essential for so many of us is poised to be there when we reach out in crisis.

From the very beginning of this process, I have been committed to ensuring that this capability is available to everyone as quickly as possible. But the roll-out of any new service can lead to confusion about where it is available and when. When it comes to matters of public safety, our policies have no room for confusion. Simply put, it can be a matter of life and death.

As a result, from the outset I believed that three elements are essential.

First, consumers should have the confidence that there is a firm date by which everyone can text to 911 nationwide.

Second, consumers should receive an immediate notification—a bounce back message—any time their text to 911 does not go through. After all, texting does not have a busy signal; no one should be left wondering whether or not a call for help has been heard.

Third, we need an extensive consumer outreach program. This outreach must involve the Commission, public safety organizations, carriers, and the deaf and hard-of-hearing community all working together.

Early on, I raised these issues with public safety organizations, carriers, and the Chairman. I am grateful that they took my concerns seriously. By coming together, we are able to move faster toward providing texting to 911 at public safety answering points across the country. Let me commend the four national wireless carriers for committing to deliver text to 911 capability to all of their customers by May 2014 and a bounce back message by June 2013. Just as importantly, they have agreed to work with public safety organizations and the Commission to help educate the public about what services are available and when.

I also want to commend the Chairman and his staff. They heard my concerns—and they responded. Their work, along with the tireless efforts of public safety officials, public-spirited commitments from carriers, and advocacy from the disabilities community brought us to this juncture.

But while the commitments made last week are a great start, we must recognize that they apply only to nationwide wireless carriers. Consumers, however, are migrating away from wireless carrier SMS texting. The next generation of texting applications is well on its way, with traditional SMS declining by 2.6 percent during the past year. As application-based texting grows in popularity, revenues from SMS texting are expected to decrease \$54 billion by 2016. The move to the next generation of messaging will not take twenty years. It could happen overnight. We must be ready.

The carriers' voluntary commitments should serve as a model for third-party applications. So I strongly encourage application providers to come to the table. They, too, need to be part of the solution. The deaf and hard-of-hearing rely extensively on these services, and we must make them part of the conversation.

In my first speech after arriving at the Commission, I spoke to public safety officials. I committed to visiting 911 centers across the country. I wanted to see the everyday heroes who staff these answering points and keep calm when calls roll in and crises mount. So far, I have had a chance to see 911 call center operations in California, Virginia, Alaska, Minnesota, and Vermont. It was on my most recent trip to Vermont that I had the privilege of visiting the first statewide text-to-911 trial. I saw first-hand how this technology works, and how it has already saved lives. Today, we take this good example and start the process of expanding it across the country. This is something to celebrate.

Thank you to the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for their fine work and their continued dedication to moving this effort forward.