

**STATEMENT OF
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BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY
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Good morning, Chairman Walden, Ranking Member Eshoo, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today along with my colleagues at the Federal Communications Commission.

This week the Commission has the future on the agenda. At our monthly meeting on Thursday, we will adopt a framework for high-band spectrum to help develop the next generation of mobile wireless service, known as 5G. This is exciting because the future belongs to the connected—and the United States should lead.

However, I want to use my time today to talk less about the future and instead discuss what can be done right now to improve our nation’s emergency number system.

Last month I was in Dallas, a city that is reeling from the events of last week—when a peaceful protest collapsed into unthinkable violence.

While in Dallas, I spent time with Betty Wafer. She’s the kind of person who knows the Big D inside and out. She was born and raised in the city and over the course of 33 years she has

risen to the top of its public safety ranks. She now wears the uniform and is in charge of 911 Communications for the Dallas Police Department.

There is not a lot she hasn't seen. Like most people who work on the 911 front lines, she has a steely calm. After all, these are people who listen to us at our most troubled and then help ensure that help is on the way.

As we walked through the Dallas 911 center, Ms. Wafer spoke about how technology has changed during her more than three decades on the job—and has altered the ways we reach out in an emergency.

The numbers back her up. Nationwide we now call 911 240 million times a year. More than 70 percent of those calls come from wireless phones rather than traditional landline phones. In other words, the bulk of our emergency calls come over a different technology than the 911 system was designed to use.

This is a problem. Because while technology has changed so much in our lives, the communications systems used by our nation's 911 call centers have not fully kept pace. I know—because I have seen this firsthand, not just in Dallas, but in the nearly two dozen 911 call centers I have visited all across the country—from Alaska to Arkansas, Vermont to Virginia, California to Colorado, Nevada to New Jersey and many more places in between.

It's not that work is not being done. In the last two years alone, the Commission has put in place policies to facilitate texting to 911. We have devised a framework to improve the ability of 911 call centers to identify the location of emergency calls made from wireless phones.

This is progress. But what comes next is even bigger. Next generation 911 services can support a whole range of data and video communications. For those who call in an emergency, it will mean the opportunity to offer real-time video from an accident. It will mean the ability to provide first responders with instantaneous pictures of a fleeing suspect or emergency incident. These capabilities can make public safety both more effective and more responsive.

But to remake the nation's 911 systems to fully reflect the digital age takes funding. Historically supporting our nations roughly 6000 911 call centers has been a local affair. There is no national program or annual federal revenue source. But, still, there is one thing this Committee can do now to kick-start local 911 modernization.

As you undoubtedly know, the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012 authorized a series of spectrum auctions at the Commission. These auctions have already raised billions—and the proceeds are dedicated to some initiatives that get a lot of attention, like establishing the First Responders Network Authority, assisting the relocation of broadcasters in the 600 MHz band, and reducing the deficit. But there is one program these spectrum auctions fund that has not yet gotten the glory it deserves—a program for next generation 911.

Section 6503 reinstates the joint 911 Implementation Office and authorizes a \$115 million grant program to update 911. You might be familiar with it—because this Committee developed this program. But it has stalled and has yet to begin more than four years after Congress authorized its creation.

So put on the pressure—because it is time to get it up and running. It is the best near-term resource we have to put next generation 911 in place. While these funds are limited, they can have broad impact if we use them wisely and fund next generation 911 projects that can be a blueprint for updating services in Dallas and communities nationwide.

Thank you. I will be happy to answer any questions you might have.