

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Inquiry Concerning 911 Access, Routing, and Location in Enterprise Communications Systems*, PS Docket No. 17-239, Notice of Inquiry (September 26, 2016)

It was nearly fifty years ago when the first 911 call was made. It took place in Haleyville, Alabama. Haleyville is a city tucked away in the northwest corner of the state. No one would mistake it for a major metropolis. Today it has a little over 4000 residents and perhaps the most noteworthy thing about it is that it is the only place in Winston County that allows the sale of alcohol. So if you visit, you can get a drink.

But Haleyville has a place in the history books. Because it got our nation's emergency number system started. And a week after it did—on the other side of the country—Nome, Alaska announced that they too had implemented 911 service. Then by the end of the last century, 93 percent of the population was covered by some form of 911 service. Congress made a nod to the local work that brought this about when just before the turn of the millennium it pronounced 911 the national emergency number in the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act.

Today there are roughly 240 million calls a year that are made to 911. More than 70 percent of them now come from wireless phones. That's certainly not what anyone was imagining five decades ago in Haleyville. But over time we have navigated changes in the way we reach out in crisis—and brought new technologies into the 911 fold. As a result, wireless, Voice over Internet Protocol, and texting have been incorporated into emergency response. Now, with this Notice of Inquiry, we seek to bring enterprise systems into the fold. These systems are often used in office buildings, college campuses, and hotels. Many of them do not support direct dialing for 911 and many more lack the capability to provide location information—and the consequences have been tragic. The Chairman deserves credit for making this a priority.

But let's be clear, we can't stop here. Because limiting our efforts to enterprise systems is thinking small. We need a big commitment; we need to remake our 911 systems for the digital age; we need to provide leadership for next generation 911.

Next generation 911 will link call centers to Internet Protocol networks that will support voice, text, 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. For those who take calls in an emergency, all of this data can expedite and inform public safety efforts, dramatically improving emergency response.

To get there is not easy. But it's worth it—and there are three big things this agency needs to address.

First, we need a common definition of next generation 911. We need to ensure that when we talk about next generation 911 in one jurisdiction it means the same thing in another jurisdiction. That is not the case today. So we need to have this agency lend its voice and support nationally-accredited standards that promote interoperability between call centers.

Second, we need to end fee diversion. In recent years, as many as 8 states have diverted funding from the line-item for 911 on consumer bills—to pay for services other than 911. We know this is happening because the agency collects this data pursuant to the Net 911 Improvement Act. This is fraud. It has to stop.

Third, we need new ideas for funding. Transitioning to a new set of standards comes at a cost. The good news is that last week the Department of Commerce finally sought comment on proposed rules for a next generation 911 grant program using \$110 million in funds from the Commission's recent spectrum auctions. The bad news is that while these funds will help, they will not reach every community in this country. We need many more ideas about how to fund the building and recurring costs of a modern emergency number system. I've offered one today: revenue raised from the auction of nationwide toll free numbers should be used to support our nationwide emergency number.

Over the past several years I have visited more than two dozen public safety answering points—from Alaska to Arkansas, Vermont to Virginia, and Colorado to California. Last month I visited with the public safety personnel at the 911 center who answered the call during the recent Congressional baseball shooting. Last week I visited with individuals who answered the call when a plane hit the Pentagon sixteen years ago on one of our darkest days. These operators are everyday heroes. They keep us safe. They save lives. But by and large they are working with communications infrastructure that has not kept pace with new technology. That's because too much of our nation's emergency number system relies on technology that has more in common with Haleyville history than the new networks of the digital age. It's time to fix that. Today's inquiry regarding enterprise systems is a start—but we need to do much, much more.