

**REMARKS OF FCC CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI
AT “911 GOES TO WASHINGTON”**

WASHINGTON, DC

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Good afternoon! It’s great to be back at 911 Goes to Washington. Or, as I call it, Washington’s most underrated Valentine’s Day tradition. Nothing says romance like going door-to-door in the Rayburn House Office Building.

Last year, we celebrated 911’s 50th anniversary at this event. The 51st anniversary is where we see who the real 911-lovers are. Add the fact that this is the Friday luncheon slot on the get-away day, and I know this has to be an audience of true believers.

But in all seriousness, it really is a pleasure to be with you. I’ll admit that I’m especially fired up after a recent visit with some of your own. Early last week, I was in New Orleans. I had the opportunity to spend some time at the Orleans Parish Communications District, which is the 911 call-handling and dispatch center for the Crescent City. This was the day after the Super Bowl, so we instantly bonded over the fact that nearly all of America wished the game had been their Saints playing my Kansas City Chiefs. Misery loves company, and all that.

But setting aside the aftertaste of the worst Super Bowl in recent memory, it was truly an exhilarating visit. Granted, *every* time I meet with emergency responders, I’m inspired by your poise and professionalism. That’s a given. But I was genuinely impressed by how the team in New Orleans, led by their energetic, optimistic director, Tyrell Morris, was strengthening the public safety communications system in every way they could think of in order to better serve the community.

On the technology side, they’re in the process of implementing cutting-edge technology to improve 911. They showed me a demo of how they use the RapidSOS clearinghouse to improve their ability to locate 911 callers. This is particularly helpful in New Orleans, where a disproportionate share of callers are tourists who may be unfamiliar with their surroundings and unable to accurately tell 911 professionals exactly where they are. (And keep in mind I was visiting during Mardi Gras season!) In a matter of seconds, they had a dispatchable location for the caller within 50 meters. The system also provided situational data beyond the caller’s location to help with response. This is a critical benefit to emergency responders given the millions of people who come into town each year to *laissez les bon temps rouler*.

The District wasn’t just focused on technology. They were also focused on their people. Just days before my visit, they had entered into a new partnership to provide specialized mental health services for their workers. This collaboration was inspired by data showing that up to 25% of 911 telecommunicators deal with post-traumatic stress disorder. As part of their self-help strategy, they had a gym on location and encouraged workers on 12-hour shifts to take a one-hour break to either exercise or sleep. The prevalence of traumatic stress disorders among 911 professionals is a challenge facing PSAPS throughout the nation. And so I was moved to see what the District is doing to help these brave men and women in their own time of greatest need.

They also sought out partners to help them do their jobs. For example, they recently entered into a partnership with Uber that enables riders to use the emergency call feature in the Uber app to provide information like car location and the names of drivers or passengers to 911 operators. And they’re working closely with the mayor to get city-wide support.

I’m sure many of you are pursuing similar, if not the same, strategies. But my big takeaway from New Orleans (other than a delightfully unhealthy king cake) was the all-of-the-above approach. Going

all-in on NG911 technology is great. But so are public-private partnerships and investments in your workforce. So do what you can to pursue every avenue.

This is the approach we're trying to take at the FCC. We try to stay open-minded and proactive, always looking for ways big and small to empower emergency responders.

This past year, we got an assist from Congress, which passed two laws to improve emergency calling. We've been hard at work implementing these statutes.

I'd first like to talk about our follow through on Kari's Law. When I spoke at last year's 911 Goes to Washington event, I was coming from the White House, where I watched the President sign the law requiring all enterprise phone systems nationwide to allow direct access to 911. Notably, I was joined in the Oval Office by Hank Hunt, who was the moral force behind this law. Direct access could have saved the life of his daughter Kari, whose own daughter's 911 calls from a hotel room never went through because the hotel's phone system required guests to dial "9" before calling 911.

That White House ceremony marked the end of a journey for Hank Hunt, but it was a signal to the FCC to get cracking. Kari's Law not only requires multi-line telephone systems—which commonly serve hotels, office buildings, and campuses—to enable users to dial 911 directly, it also contains a notification requirement. Now, when a 911 call is made in these settings, a front desk or security office will be alerted so they are ready to facilitate building entry by first responders. In September 2017, before the law had been enacted, the FCC launched an inquiry into these issues, so we were able to hit to ground running. In September 2018, the Commission proposed rules specifying and clarifying the obligations of companies to meet these statutory requirements. We expect to adopt final rules later this year.

The second new law driving the Commission's public safety agenda of the past year has been RAY BAUM's Act, which requires the FCC to consider adopting rules to ensure that "dispatchable location" information is conveyed with 911 calls, regardless of the technological platform being used. You folks know the issue all too well. Sometimes, being able to reach emergency services isn't enough. If you're calling 911 from a large office building, it's important that first responders know where you are in that building so they can find you quickly. In accordance with RAY BAUM's Act, the Commission sought public input on the feasibility of requiring a dispatchable location for 911 calls from multi-line telephone systems and other technological platforms, including fixed telephony services, interconnected and other VoIP services, and Internet-based Telecommunications Relay Services. We are hard at work to complete this effort by our statutory deadline of September 2019.

As I said at the outset, the Commission takes an all-of-the-above approach to public safety, so in addition to meeting our statutory obligations, the Commission is pursuing its own initiatives to strengthen emergency calling.

One issue we took on in 2018 was the problem of "misrouted" 911 calls from wireless phones. Currently, wireless 911 calls are routed to 911 call centers based on the location of the tower that handles the call. But when calls are made near a county or city border, the nearest cell tower may be in a neighboring jurisdiction, so you end up with 911 calls being answered by emergency call-takers who have to transfer the call to first responders in another jurisdiction. This wastes precious time that would be better spent connecting those in need with those who could help.

This challenge was really brought to life for me by a visit to Washington D.C.'s emergency communications center. I was told that, on pretty much an hourly basis, they get a misrouted 911 call that has to be transferred to Maryland authorities. We're talking about upwards of tens of thousands of 911 misroutes a year.

Last year, we launched an examination to figure out how widespread a problem this is and how we can ensure that 911 calls are routed based on the location of *the caller* as opposed to the location of

the cell tower that handles that call. We're reviewing the evidence and weighing how the FCC can best promote wireless 911 call-routing improvements.

In addition to our work ensuring that calls from office buildings have dispatchable locations, the FCC is pursuing other avenues to help first responders locate wireless 911 callers. As this audience knows, the Commission established an increasingly stringent series of new location accuracy benchmarks as part of the most recent major update to our Enhanced 911 rules.

Our challenge is to make sure wireless providers meet those standards—standards that will get considerably more stringent in 2020 and 2021. By those times, wireless carriers will have to meet accuracy standards for 70% and then 80% of wireless calls respectively, up from 50% currently. We continue to see meaningful progress toward this goal. Last year, the four nationwide providers committed to incorporating the device-based location technologies found in most smartphones into their Enhanced 911 location solutions. The providers are also building a national database that will give first responders the dispatchable location of 911 calls from many indoor locations.

Another challenge on the horizon is identifying a wireless 911 caller's vertical location in multi-story buildings. The wireless industry has been testing how best to measure so-called Z-axis accuracy, and, in August, it outlined a proposal based on its findings. In September, the Commission sought public comment on this plan. Here too, we're currently studying the public record, and I expect that the Commission will act to set a Z-axis standard later this year.

The last issue I want to hit on today is one that makes me and a lot of other people angry: 911 fee diversion. Each year, the FCC submits a report to Congress on this issue. And each year, we see that a small but significant number of states continue to divert resources that should go to 911 but don't. Our most recent report found that in 2017, six states and one territory siphoned off \$285 million. For context, our survey also found that \$199 million from 911 fees went toward implementing NG911. When more 911 fees are going to non-911 purposes than to the deployment of the next generation of 911 technologies, that's an outrage, as Commissioner O'Rielly has often pointed out. In light of the fact that this is the tenth iteration of this report and we *still* see states diverting funds, it's clear that transparency alone isn't enough to shame the offending states into doing the right thing. I'm ready and willing to work with Congress and other stakeholders to make sure that all public safety communications fees strengthen the public safety communications system.

I'd like to close by going back to my new friends in New Orleans. One of the things that Director Tyrell Morris has done is post fliers around the office with the acronym SHOW UP: S-Sincere, H-Honest, O-Optimistic, W-Well-informed, U-Upbeat, and P-Procedurally compliant. Personally, I think I would have gone with Professional for P—that more accurately describes the public safety workers I met. But I love the overall sentiment. In your line of work, you have to be “on” every moment of your shift to ensure that you are there for the American people when they most need help. As the head of the FCC, I feel that same sense of obligation to you. That's why, when something unexpected happens like the CenturyLink service outage from six weeks ago, I immediately directed our Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau to launch an investigation into the cause and impact of this outage. When a new challenge arises, I owe it to you to show up. And I pledge to you today that I will always do my best to be there for the public safety community.

Thank you for partnering with us, and thank you for all that you do, day-in and day-out, to serve and protect the American people.