

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Location-Based Routing for Wireless 911 Calls*, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, PS Docket No. 18-64

Improving access to 911 stands out as one of our most important responsibilities at the Commission. That's why I'm pleased to approve today's item on location-based routing. If adopted, the rules we propose will reduce the number of 911 calls and texts that are misrouted to the wrong public safety answering point (PSAP). They'll push the wireless industry to evolve to more precise call-routing technologies—technologies that are available, that work, and that have been implemented by some carriers already.

Think about it this way. 911 has been around for over fifty years. Back in the era of copper, you could generally trust the network to connect you to a dispatcher who possessed the authority to send help to your physical address. Fast forward to today, and the vast majority of 911 calls are now wireless. Yet many wireless carriers still rely on sector-based routing to direct those calls to the right PSAP. The result is that far too many 911 calls—over 100,000 in the DC area alone, according to one estimate—are answered by the wrong call center. In other words, while it sure has become easier to place a call during an emergency since the 1960s, the system has in fact slipped backwards in its basic bond to get your call where it needs to go on the first dial.

I welcomed our effort in June to refresh the record on potential solutions to this problem. In no uncertain terms, the record shows we can do better. It shows that a few nationwide carriers have already implemented location-based routing in some or all of their network. It also shows that callers have experienced a substantial drop in misroutes after the switch, as expected. We also know that most handsets can develop location information precisely—and quickly—using device-based location technologies. We ought to be able to figure out how to use those capabilities to route 911 calls more accurately.

It bears mentioning that location-based routing isn't just good for consumers. It's also good for the public safety community. As I mentioned last month, many PSAPs face significant operational challenges. I witnessed this first-hand when I recently visited a PSAP in my hometown of Kansas City. In addition to crushing call volumes, they told me they're dealing with staff shortages, complex technology migrations, and even cyber security challenges. We need to do what we can to decrease their burden. With this proceeding, we can reduce the amount of time PSAPs waste transferring callers outside their jurisdiction. We can also reduce how often PSAPs must deal with an incoming transfer—which, by definition, is a caller who has lost precious minutes in a setting where every second counts.

I thank the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for its excellent work on this item.