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For Immediate Release

CHAIRWOMAN ROSENWORCEL PROPOSES NEW EMERGENCY ALERT CODE FOR MISSING AND ENDANGERED PERSONS

Proposal Would Help Law Enforcement Alert Public of Missing Native and Indigenous Persons, Build on Efforts to Collect Data on These Cases

WASHINGTON, February 21, 2024—Federal Communications Commission Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel today proposed that the FCC add a new alert option to deliver critical messages to the public over television and radio about missing and endangered persons. Adding a new “Missing and Endangered Persons” alert code to the nation’s Emergency Alert System would help law enforcement provide timely alerts to galvanize public attention to missing native and indigenous persons, as well as other groups, and build on efforts to collect comprehensive data on these cases. The alert option would be similar to the use of AMBER Alerts to help locate missing children.

“Law enforcement agencies successfully use AMBER Alerts on TV and radio to help mobilize public attention and recover abducted children. But we do not have a similar code in the Emergency Alert System dedicated to sounding the alarm over other missing and endangered persons, particularly the thousands of missing native and indigenous women who have disappeared from their homes never to be seen again,” **said Chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel**. “Creating a new ‘Missing and Endangered Persons’ alert category can close this gap, help ensure no person who is missing and in danger is left behind, and save lives.”

“Violence against Native people is a crisis, and far too many families and communities have suffered as a result. The federal government must take more decisive action to properly notify their loved ones and locate these individuals to keep families together,” **said Senator Ben Ray Luján**. “I’m glad the FCC is taking necessary steps to establish an alert code for missing and endangered persons that will broadcast critical information that could save lives and prevent more harm to Native communities and Tribal Nations.”

The Chairwoman will share the draft proposal with her fellow commissioners today and plans a vote on it at the agency’s March 14, 2024, Open Meeting.

Alert originators, such as local public safety officials, use the Emergency Alert System by selecting from a group of fixed event codes based on the nature of the situation (for example, “CAE” signifies a Child Abduction Emergency, otherwise known as an AMBER Alert). If adopted by a vote of the full Commission, the Chairwoman’s proposal, called a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, would seek public comment on creating a new “MEP” alert code for missing and endangered persons who do not meet the criteria for an AMBER Alert. The proposal would also pose questions about the relationship of this potential new alerting category with the Wireless Emergency Alert system, which does not use event codes like the Emergency Alert System does.

The draft proposal will be posted publicly on Thursday, February 22 at: www.fcc.gov/march-2024-open-commission-meeting.

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