

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER AJIT PAI**

Re: *Facilitating the Deployment of Text-to-911 and Other Next Generation 911 Applications*, PS Docket No. 11-153; *Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment*, PS Docket No. 10-255.

The deployment of Next Generation 911 (NG911) holds great promise for improving our nation's emergency response capabilities. I am a strong supporter of NG911 and am pleased to vote for today's item because I am optimistic that it will help text-to-911 functionality become one of the first NG911 features available to the American people.

This is good news for deaf and hard of hearing individuals, as well as those with speech impediments. This is good news for domestic violence victims and others whose lives may depend on non-verbal communication in an emergency. And this is good news for anyone who for any reason cannot place a voice call to first responders. For all of these Americans, the ability to text 911 may mean the difference between life and death.

I appreciate my colleagues' willingness to incorporate my input into today's item. For example, the Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeks comment on an expanded role for IP Relay providers in this area. Those providers are uniquely suited to make sure that whenever a deaf or hard of hearing American tries to reach emergency personnel, the message will get through—directly as a text wherever text-to-911 is available and through relay interpretation elsewhere. The item also asks about reasonable timeframes for interconnected text providers to implement text-to-911 functionality. Not every text provider is in the same situation—technologically, financially, and otherwise—and we must make sure we understand the unique challenges of each class of provider rather than simply lumping them all together.

As we move forward in this proceeding, we also must remember this: Whenever possible, Americans should call—not text—911. For one, most public safety answering points (PSAPs) are currently unable to accept and process text messages, which means that calls will go through in many places where texts cannot. For another, a call gives first responders more concrete location information, as well as better situational awareness. That's why public safety organizations agree that the right decision is to talk, rather than text, whenever possible.

I want thank the diligent staff in the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau for their hard work on this item and look forward to continuing to work with them on this important issue.

Finally, as innovative as text-to-911 functionality is, I want to close by noting that we still have a ways to go on 911 basics. In particular, Americans expect that if they call 911 from a hotel, motel, or office building, they will reach someone who can help. But as the nation learned from a tragic case last month, that isn't true.

On December 1, Kari Rene Hunt Dunn met her estranged husband in a Marshall, Texas hotel room so that he could visit their three children, ages nine, four, and three. During that encounter, Kari's husband forced her into the bathroom and began stabbing her. Kari's nine-year-old daughter did exactly what every child is taught to do during an emergency. She picked up the phone and dialed 911. The call didn't go through, so she tried again. And again. And again. All in all, she dialed 911 four times—but she never reached emergency personnel. Why? Because the hotel's phone system required her to dial 9 to get an outside line. Tragically, Kari died as a result of this vicious attack.

Kari's daughter behaved heroically under horrific circumstances. But the hotel's phone system failed her, her mother, and her entire family. Earlier this month, I began an inquiry to determine what steps can be taken to prevent tragedies like Kari's from happening again. I am enormously gratified by

the reaction that this issue has received so far. Awareness of this problem is clearly on the rise. Our nation's hotel industry has already formed a task force to tackle the issue, and I look forward to working with them closely.

Kari is gone, and there is nothing we can do to bring her back. But her death will not be in vain if we can take action to ensure that whenever someone tries to reach 911, they connect with emergency personnel. That's the message that I heard when I had the privilege of speaking to Kari's father recently. That's the message I've gotten from public safety communications experts. That's the message delivered in today's item. And over the coming weeks and months, that's the goal I intend to accomplish.