

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN

Re: Amendment of Part 11 of the Commission's Rules Regarding the Emergency Alert System; PS Docket No. 15-94; Wireless Emergency Alerts; Docket No. 15-91, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

The FCC's role in strengthening our nation's public alert and warnings systems barely registers a blip over the news and public awareness radar screens; yet this obligation is one of this agency's most important. I strongly support today's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, even in the absence of fanfare or praise, because it takes a comprehensive approach to improving those critical systems that warn citizens of imminent threats to life and property.

During my tenure at the FCC, we have focused on the three services that the federal government regulates or manages: the Emergency Alert System or EAS, Wireless Emergency Alerts, and the Integrated Public Alert Warning System; but today's item, properly recognizes, that advanced commercial technologies, such as social media platforms, can also play important roles in keeping citizens safe. These technologies enable services such as crowdsourced data, multilingual accessibility, and multimedia capability which may offer public safety agencies, at all levels, new ways to warn our citizens when they are their most vulnerable, as well as enable us to assess the public's response to new and evolving approaches.

The item acknowledges that some social media platforms are already improving the accessibility of emergency messages by offering users the ability to translate alerts from English into more than forty languages. And yes, we should encourage emergency managers at the federal, state, and local levels, to integrate those proven, most advanced, commercial technologies into their matrices so that no member of our society is left more at risk in times of crisis.

Another important aspect of this Notice, is that it proposes several thoughtful approaches in addressing significant vulnerabilities in the nation's EAS infrastructure. Over the past several years, there have been a number of security breaches where hackers gained access to Emergency Alert Security facilities and actually sent out fraudulent or false alerts. One such breach is one too many.

The Commission has worked hard, mostly behind the scenes, to strengthen security protocols by encouraging parties to voluntarily adopt industry best practices; but now is the time for us to consider instituting more uniform, accurate and consistent measures when it comes local, state and national EAS plans.

The Notice recommends common sense measures such as requiring the filing of annual certifications which would affirm that entities are performing those best practices recommended by our CSRIC advisory committee, mandating the reporting of false alerts, as well as ensuring that jurisdictions are taking the necessary steps to ensure that those alerts are originated by authorized sources.

I hope all relevant stakeholders will carefully consider these proposals, weigh in, and provide details on any alternative methods that can more effectively help us meet our public safety as well as local, state and national security goals. And I commend Chairman Wheeler for his leadership, and thank Admiral David Simpson and the Public Safety Bureau for putting forth proposals that seek to strike the appropriate balance between cost, interoperability, and public safety.