

Staff Discussion Draft -- Next Generation 9-1-1 Act of 2017

Senators Nelson and Klobuchar

When Americans are in trouble, they know to call 9-1-1. Our 9-1-1 system remains the envy of the world, with millions of calls answered and countless lives saved each year. But that system is showing its age – in fact, it remains reliant on technology that has quickly become outdated in a rapidly changing, Internet-enabled world. At a time when the vast majority of 9-1-1 calls now come from mobile phones, 9-1-1 call centers still face challenges in handling the types of communications that consumers expect from even basic smartphones today.

Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1) will allow people to communicate with 9-1-1 call centers the same way they communicate with one other. When faced with an emergency, people will be able to send text messages, pictures, videos, and other information captured by smartphones, tablets, and other devices to 9-1-1. 9-1-1 call centers will be able to process and pass this information seamlessly to first responders across jurisdictions so that they will have instantaneous, accurate, comprehensive information about an emergency. This interoperability will improve emergency response efforts and will save lives. But despite heroic efforts by the public safety professionals who staff and manage the 9-1-1 call centers, progress on NG 9-1-1 has been slow, largely due to a lack of funds and local resources.

The Next Generation 9-1-1 Act of 2017 from Senators Nelson and Klobuchar makes the transition to NG 9-1-1 a national priority. The Act will further state and federal cooperation to build Next Generation 9-1-1 systems nationwide. It refocuses federal efforts to support NG 9-1-1 and provides necessary resources to use to help develop and implement NG 9-1-1 transition plans. But it keeps governance and control of the 9-1-1 system where it belongs – with state and localities.

The Act seeks to accomplish several major goals:

- *Funding.* Provides additional Federal support through an existing 9-1-1 grant program (jointly administered by the Departments of Commerce and Transportation) to assist states and localities in upgrading to and implementing NG 9-1-1 technologies and services.
- *Uniform technical standards.* Ensures that states or localities receiving support have developed a plan for the deployment of NG 9-1-1 services (1) built upon accredited, non-proprietary, consensus-based standards; and (2) designed to meet various commitments to ensure a robust and effective NG 9-1-1 system. These standards and commitments will make sure that the 9-1-1 system is able to accept and process voice, text, data, and video and pass that on to first responders in a seamless, interoperable fashion, across jurisdictional lines.
- *Cybersecurity and training.* Provides assistance to NG 9-1-1 systems to help them harden their systems against cyberattacks and provides necessary resources to allow training of 9-1-1 personnel in order to maximize the public safety benefits offered by those systems.
- *Governance.* Maintains the current 9-1-1 state and local governance structure. States would have to identify a point of contact for 9-1-1 issues as a requirement for receiving a grant and ensure opportunities for participation by local 9-1-1 agencies. It also directs the Federal government to provide administrative and procurement support for state and local efforts in the move to full implementation of NG 9-1-1.