



Public Safety Alliance
Dedicated to First Responders...First

***Hearing before the Senate Committee on
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs***

**Ten Years After 9/11:
Improving Emergency Communications**

July 27, 2011

Dirksen Senate Office Building

Testimony of Charles H. Ramsey

Police Commissioner, Philadelphia Police Department

President, Major Cities Chiefs Association

President, Police Executive Research Forum

Good Morning Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins and all invited speakers and guests. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss a critical issue affecting all public safety and law enforcement organizations across our country, and our ability to serve the public. Having had 42 years in law enforcement, I have witnessed many important changes in emergency communications across police departments in three cities: first in Chicago for 30 years, then as Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department here in Washington, DC, for nine years, and now as Police Commissioner in Philadelphia for the past three and half years. I also have the privilege of serving as the President of the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA) and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), both of which are members of the Public Safety Alliance (PSA).

The PSA is a coalition of the leading national public safety associations that represent every law enforcement, fire, EMS, emergency management agency and first responder organization in the country. I am here on behalf of first responders across this country to thank you, Mr. Chairman and Senator McCain for introducing bill S-1040: The Broadband for First Responders Act of 2011.

We hope that you will also continue to work closely with Senator Rockefeller whose Committee introduced bill S.911: The Public Safety Spectrum and Wireless Innovation Act of 2011. This bill was recently passed by a 21-4 bipartisan vote by your counterparts in the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee.

These bills fulfill an absolutely critical need. They allocate the D Block to public safety; provide the necessary funding to build out and expand the nationwide broadband network; and establish a governance structure in cooperation with state and local authorities.

Since September 11th, 2001, like many other jurisdictions around the nation, the Philadelphia region worked diligently to ensure adequate Local, State and Federal coordination for emergency communications. We established an "Interoperable Communications Committee" within our Southeast Pennsylvania Regional Task Force. Representatives from the five counties in the Philadelphia UASI, as well as seven additional regional counties from New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland comprise this task force. I'd like to thank Committee Member, Senator Tom Carper, for his assistance in strengthening homeland security in our region.

Let us be very clear in our mission: A terrorist attack or a major catastrophic event knows no municipal, state or federal boundary. Emergency preparedness spans across lines, and demands that law enforcement and public safety organizations across the country plan and coordinate their responses.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the committee, we have an extremely valuable opportunity in front of us to meet our needs in emergency communications. Seamless interoperability can only be achieved through a dedicated public safety nationwide broadband network. The allocation of the D block for public safety organizations, with adequate capacity, control and funding, is the only proposal that will meet the challenges and demands that we confront. As President of MCCA and PERF, I am here to support this solution, which serves law enforcement and public safety organizations, and most importantly, helps to protect the American people in the best way possible.

Commercial networks are not designed to serve our public safety needs. Past experience with major national disasters have demonstrated that these networks are not interchangeable with dedicated public safety networks. There are fundamental differences in the architecture that go to the heart of public safety communications. The Public Safety Alliance will strongly oppose any legislation or resolution that supports auctioning the D block. Public safety becomes both less public and less safe if we auction any part of the D Block to the highest commercial bidder.

We need the upfront funding to jump-start the investment and build out of the network, and to attract and encourage commercial interest and competition. We will partner with the private sector to leverage and make maximum use of the existing infrastructure, while managing operations locally through a national governance structure.

This Committee, the House Homeland Security Committee, the House Energy and Commerce Committee, and the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee have all held numerous hearings over the past two years on the proposed public safety spectrum and the nationwide broadband network. Congress has asked many good questions, and hopefully you now have the information you need to make an informed recommendation.

Our first responders, who put their lives on the line every day, must have the resources that they need to do their jobs more efficiently and effectively, armed with real-time data, video and other critical information. We can only accomplish this goal if we have the latest in mobile broadband technology that is fully interoperable on a Local, State, and Federal level. The ability to share mission critical information nationwide to coordinate and plan our response to emergencies depends on having this capability.

I would like to thank all of the Members of the Committee for your continued time and commitment to finding a solution that will meet the communications needs of our first responders, and will best serve the American people. What Congress decides now will dictate the future of our emergency response capabilities. Ten years after 9/11, we urge you to make the decision that will finally establish a dedicated nationwide public safety broadband network.

I am happy to answer any questions that you may have now. Thank you for your time and consideration.