



April 6th, 2021

RE: Position Statement - Leading Infrastructure for Tomorrow's America Act (LIFT America Act)

As many of you are aware, there is pending Federal legislation as part of the Infrastructure package that is strictly focused on Next Generation 9-1-1. It has a price tag of \$15B for NG911, some of which will be pushed out in grants. If you are following the legislation, you also know that there is a lot of differing opinions and some public bickering between two very prominent public safety organizations. We wanted to take this opportunity as the WA APCO/NENA Chapter Leadership, the WA 911 Advisory Committee Leadership and the State 911 Coordinator, to provide our view of the legislation, what we as the WA 911 community can do to help ensure passage of the bill, and our position on the ongoing tension.

The bill is good but not perfect. That being said an imperfect bill that can get billions of dollars of grants to get the nation to NG911 would be invaluable.

Here are some of the areas of the bill where there is disagreement:

Security Operations Center: the bill establishes a federal level SOC that would *'serve as a centralized emergency comms cybersecurity center that has the ability to provide integrated intrusion, detection and prevention services at multiple levels and layers, in support of local operations;'* There are concerns that this will lead to the feds having more control over 911 especially with respect to cybersecurity. Will they be able to step in with federal authority to monitor a state or local system. It also introduces some complex privacy, technical and legal challenges into the implementation process. The objective might be better met by increasing the support of cybersecurity through the already established CISA.

Commonly Accepted Standards: Here is where the real tiff is between the two national organizations. The bill states; *'The term 'commonly accepted standards' means the technical standards followed by the communications industry for network, device, and Internet Protocol connectivity that enable interoperability, including but not limited to—'* It then goes on to list certain standard development bodies as examples. The concern is that NENA nor the i3 Standard is listed even though it is what most of the states are using in their RFPs for ESNets. It also doesn't mention any of the GIS standards that are used in NG911. Yes, there is the phrase 'included but not limited to' however, the absence of certain standards is being seen as shot at one of the organizations. This term is unnecessarily prescriptive and would have been better not to call out only a handful of standard making bodies and purposely leave out others. It could have the unintended consequence of impeding or slowing down implementation if the feds question a standard not specifically listed is being used. Additionally, there is a restriction on the use of proprietary standards which is critical because one of the organizations recently stated in public that the i3 standard is proprietary, which we do not agree. Some also argue that proprietary standards and interfaces have a role in innovative new technologies.



NG911 Advisory Board: The legislation establishes a NG911 Advisory Board to 'advise the Office in carrying out its duties and responsibilities' which appear to help guide the grant. The board consists of 16 public safety members 4 representing law enforcement, 4 representing fire and rescue, 4 representing EMS and 4 representing 911 professionals. Since this is 911 grant, we feel that 911 professionals should have a more than a quarter of the representation on a board that will help shape the grant program including, potentially what will be eligible.

Those are the main points of concern; but as we said, even an imperfect bill would significantly help our state move forward.

So, what can you do? First read the bill, get familiar with what it says. Then spark discussions with your peers and other stakeholders. Ask questions of us, organizations and your teams. As this legislation works its way through the system, we will keep everyone updated and let you know when and if we need people to engage with their elected officials to show support for the bill and how vital it is for public safety. We will continue these discussions at the different venues we have, Chapter meetings, AC meetings and are planning a special meeting regarding the legislation in the near future to allow for discussion.

One final note. As we mentioned there has been a lot of bickering between the two organizations that has spilled out into the public arena. We find this to be extremely unfortunate and does not represent who we are as a chapter and as the Washington 911 community. The only side we take is that of our community and what is best for our PSTs, our ECCs/PSAPs and the people we serve. We are proud to be a joint chapter and continue to support both organizations even though we do not support their public fighting.

Lora Ueland
WA APCO/NENA Chapter President

Keith Flewelling
Washington State 911 Advisory Committee Chair

Adam Wasserman
Washington State Enhanced 911 Coordinator