

**STATEMENT OF
SENATOR ERNEST F. HOLLINGS
HEARING ON INDUSTRY COMPLIANCE WITH E911 RULES**

OCTOBER 16, 2001

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN. I APPRECIATE YOUR LEADERSHIP IN CALLING THIS AFTERNOON'S HEARING. I AM REMINDED THAT THE VERY FIRST SECTION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS ACT STATES THAT A FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE OF THE ACT IS TO PROMOTE "THE SAFETY OF LIFE AND PROPERTY THROUGH THE USE OF WIRE AND RADIO COMMUNICATION." AS SUCH, OUR FOCUS TODAY ON THE AVAILABILITY OF EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES AND THEIR VITAL IMPORTANCE TO PUBLIC SAFETY IS BOTH TIMELY AND PROPER -- PARTICULARLY SO, IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT TERRORIST ATTACKS ON OUR COUNTRY.

IN 1968, SENATOR RANKIN FIFE COMPLETED THE FIRST "911" CALL IN HALEYVILLE, ALABAMA. SINCE THEN, AMERICANS' USE OF "911" HAS MUSHROOMED TO THE POINT WHERE, TODAY, 911 SERVICE HAS BECOME SYNONYMOUS WITH EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE. NEVERTHELESS, UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE OF DIALING "911" FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES HAS ALSO RESULTED IN A

NUMBER OF NEW CHALLENGES. IN PARTICULAR, THE METEORIC GROWTH OF MOBILE PHONES HAS SPURRED THE NEED TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT CALL LOCATION TECHNOLOGIES AS PART OF "ENHANCED 911" OR "E911" SERVICES THAT CAN PINPOINT THE LOCATION OF THE NOW MORE THAN 43 MILLION (AND GROWING) WIRELESS CALLS MADE TO 911 EACH YEAR.

FIVE YEARS AGO, IN RESPONSE TO THIS NEED, WIRELESS CARRIERS AND THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNITY HAMMERED OUT A CONSENSUS AGREEMENT THAT WAS THE BASIS FOR THE FCC'S FIRST E911 ORDER. UNDER THOSE RULES, WIRELESS CARRIERS WERE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE THE LOCATION OF ALL 911 CALLS BY LONGITUDE AND LATITUDE IN CONFORMANCE WITH CERTAIN ACCURACY REQUIREMENTS BY OCTOBER 1, 2001. UNFORTUNATELY, THE REALITY IS THAT THE WIRELESS INDUSTRY HAS FAILED TO MEET THAT DEADLINE. IN CONTRAST, ALL OF THE MAJOR WIRELESS CARRIERS AND DOZENS OF SMALLER CARRIERS SOUGHT WAIVERS FROM THE FCC, CLAIMING EITHER THE ABSENCE OF A SATISFACTORY TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTION OR THE NEED FOR ADDITIONAL TIME.

THUS, TODAY'S HEARING AFFORDS THIS SUBCOMMITTEE A

CRITICAL OPPORTUNITY TO GRADE THE VARIOUS PARTIES ON THEIR EFFORTS TO DATE AND TO DECIDE WHAT CAN AND MUST BE DONE TO ENSURE THAT WIRELESS CARRIERS, LOCATION SERVICE PROVIDERS, AND THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNITY CAN PROVIDE AND PROCESS “PHASE II E911 LOCATION INFORMATION” AS SOON AS TECHNICALLY POSSIBLE.

IN THIS VEIN, I HOPE THE MESSAGE FROM CONGRESS IS CLEAR: WHILE WE DO NOT EXPECT CARRIERS TO ACHIEVE WHAT IS TECHNICALLY IMPOSSIBLE, WE WILL, WHERE PUBLIC SAFETY IS IN THE BALANCE, REQUIRE THAT CARRIERS MOVE EXPEDITIOUSLY TO DO WHAT IS POSSIBLE. AFTER ALL, THE WIRELESS SPECTRUM BELONGS TO THE PUBLIC, AND THUS, SHOULD BE MADE TO SERVE THE PUBLIC.

I LOOK FORWARD TO LISTENING TO THE OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF OUR DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF WITNESSES AND TO THEIR RESPONSES TO OUR QUESTIONS.

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