

Testimony of George Heinrichs  
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Before the Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation  
United States Senate

Hearing on S. 1063  
“IP-Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety Act of 2005.”

September 1, 2005

Senator Burns,

I am George Heinrichs, CEO of Intrado Inc., the provider of the core infrastructure of our nation's emergency communications network. I have been privileged to work with you on 911 issues for many years. In fact, I first testified before you in the Senate Communications Subcommittee in May of 1999 when you convened a hearing on the original E911 bill, which required that 911 be the universal number for emergency calls over cell phones. Fortunately, the *Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999*, which you authored, passed into law. I have no doubt that many lives have been saved by this commonsense piece of legislation. Thank you for inviting me to testify today on the critical topic of bringing lifesaving enhanced 911 capabilities to the increasingly important area of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services.

I would also like to take the opportunity to acknowledge the tireless efforts of my colleagues who are also here to testify regarding national concerns, namely David Jones of NENA, Wanda McCarley of APCO, Greg Rohde of the E911 Institute and Jeffrey Citron of Vonage. Their leadership and countless hours of work have significantly contributed to furthering emergency services in our country. It is truly a team effort and I am proud during my career to have served as a call taker, EMS responder and law enforcement officer. Today, my role is in service to a much larger constituency as the primary provider of our nation's 911 technology.

Senator Burns, you have long been a champion of 911 issues and have shown both a tremendous passion and effective advocacy for creating strong coalitions that have

resulted in lifesaving legislation. I should add that the location of today's hearing in your beautiful state of Montana is particularly appropriate, for rural states have the challenge of dealing with vast distances that make efficient and universal emergency communications all the more important and absolutely vital for their citizens.

Unfortunately, many rural states suffer in this regard without the leadership and resources of your home state. Furthermore, as Montana is currently in the grip of the fire season, threats to the public safety highlight the constant need to attend to the State's emergency communications infrastructure.

In your capacity as a champion of 911 issues in the Senate, your efforts have been relentless in seizing any opportunity to upgrade our nation's critical emergency communications networks. Most recently, the public safety community was particularly impressed at the act of political leadership you displayed on the final day of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress by simply refusing to allow the Senate to go out of session until the *ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004*, which you authored, was passed. While it was the very last bill passed in the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, it was also among the most important, as the bill authorized \$1.25 billion for upgrades to public safety answering points across the country to allow for 911 callers to be accurately located.

Unlike so many issues before Congress, 911 is truly bipartisan in nature, which you showed by reaching across the aisle to team with Senator Clinton in creating the E911 Caucus. In the little more than two years since its creation, the E911 Caucus has rapidly

transformed into a key national policy forum where the public safety community musters support for lifesaving initiatives.

Just as you showed great vision in moving forward on bringing critical 911 services to cell phones, you recognized early on that as VoIP services began to grow in popularity, lifesaving 911 capabilities remain an essential aspect of telecommunications service to all Americans. Last summer, you offered the Burns amendment to VoIP legislation being considered in the Senate Commerce Committee, which required 911 services to be offered by VoIP providers. You have continued this leadership by championing Senate Bill 1063, the *IP-Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety Act of 2005*.

Before discussing the merits of this legislation, I would first like to provide you with a brief description of Intrado. For over a quarter of a century, telecommunications providers, public safety organizations and government agencies have turned to Intrado for their communications needs. Founded in 1979, Intrado has built a strong reputation as an innovator in emergency communications. Today, Intrado provides the core of North America's 911 infrastructure and a wide range of offerings for the safety and mobility markets that includes 911 data management, call routing and subscription services, wireless data services and notification services.

Throughout its history, Intrado has enthusiastically participated in bringing its experience and resources to bear in the evolution of America's emergency communications policy and infrastructure. As 911 has grown to become an essential element of

telecommunications service, Intrado has played a key role in defining, building and maintaining our complex emergency communications infrastructure.

The rapid growth of wireless and Voice over Internet Protocol communications and other alternative technologies presents new challenges to the current infrastructure. Intrado products, services and systems support an estimated 200 million 911 calls each year, with a growing percentage of these calls coming from wireless and VoIP phones. The Intrado Intelligent Emergency Network™, Intrado's next generation, IP-based emergency communications services network, is designed to address and support these changing communications requirements.

Turning our attention to Senate Bill 1063, Intrado would like to extend its full support for this critical public safety legislation. Senator Burns, your leadership and commitment to ensuring that our nation's citizens continue to receive the emergency services they need when dialing the digits "911," regardless of the technology employed by users, have been met with much-deserved, widespread approval in the public safety community.

In addition, there are vital issues that still need to be addressed that only Congress has the authority on which to act. The technology that is required to provide both fixed and nomadic VoIP subscribers with emergency services exists today; however, the necessary policy changes are not yet in place, and both Congress and the Federal Communications Commission must continue to work together to ensure such changes are made.

As such, Intrado proposes the following policy enhancements that will provide the appropriate statutory framework for the delivery of emergency services to all subscribers of IP-Enabled services:

### **Qualified Access to the 911 Network**

A critical matter that still needs to be clarified is exactly what types of entities are afforded access into the 911 network in order to reliably deliver the caller's location and call back number to the appropriate Answering Point when a 911 call is placed from an IP-enabled device. Without minimum standards for access into our nation's critical 911 infrastructure, VoIP Service Providers operating outside of this country or those who are technically naïve would be granted access to the E911 network, posing a significant threat to homeland security. This is not a theoretical concern, as America has already been the target of increasingly sophisticated attacks from organizations of foreign origin on our core emergency information infrastructure, which mirror previous denial of service attacks on the Internet at large.

This clear and present danger to the security of our nation must be acknowledged and prevented. If the 911 network of the United States were rendered inoperable, the results could be tragic. Clearly, safeguarding our 911 infrastructure from these threats through a minimally intrusive qualification process is paramount. E911 Service Providers, who currently provide access into the 911 network, must have the technical acumen to ensure those providers gaining access are qualified and meet an appropriate level of technical sophistication and security, for the purposes of providing E911 services. The combination of qualified E911 Service Provider operation of the secure network connectivity point

and some minimal criterion for companies that interconnect with them would ensure our nation's future E911 network is at least as safe and reliable as today's 911 infrastructure.

Appropriate policy measures should be considered that provide a framework for the evolution of the 911 network to accommodate future advancements in telecommunications. This should include accommodation or modification of the current 911 network and the setting of clear objectives to move the US forward in more advanced and intelligent communications infrastructures.

### **Official Standards**

Federal policy should recognize the important role of accredited standards organizations and should insist on adherence to 911 standards developed within those organizations. Having this policy measure will ensure that appropriate rules are in place that do not hinder the deployment of VoIP 911 services across the country and are in line with this current technology. Legacy deployment practices will not work in this new IP environment and reliance on such will only slow down a nationwide rollout of emergency services.

### **Liability Protection**

Given that only Congress can assign liability protection to IP-Enabled Service Providers, it is imperative that federal legislation is enacted to ensure this provision becomes a federal mandate. Congress must grant VoIP providers the same liability protection and immunity as dictated by the States – much like you did for wireless carriers under the original Burns E911 bill, the *Wireless Communications and Privacy Act of 1999*. In

order for the IP-Enabled Service Providers to obtain liability protection, they will need to meet certain criteria so that the integrity of the 911 network is not placed in jeopardy. In addition, it is important that liability protection be extended to third party providers, vendors and agents of these IP-Enabled Service Providers.

As VoIP services become ever more popular among Americans, our nation's telecommunications policy must keep pace with this development. One key aim of policymakers when creating the proper regulatory structure of VoIP technology should be the preservation of our nation's critical E911 information infrastructure. You have shown your leadership in the national policy arena by sponsoring vital public safety legislation which is balanced, far-reaching and has been met with enthusiastic support. By enacting policy that addresses the aforementioned issues, Congress will not only preserve the integrity and reliability of the 911 network, but will also achieve its goal of providing the policy framework required to ensure all users of IP-Enabled services have access to full E911 emergency services. Again, Intrado thanks you for your well-considered, commonsense legislation and supports its passage by the Congress in rapid fashion.

Finally, I am pleased to see Michael Brown, the Under Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security in attendance and would like to extend my appreciation to him for all of his work in bridging the gap between emergency services and homeland security. The Under Secretary's understanding of the real threats facing America's communities is a credit to him and to this administration. Creating and maintaining the best emergency

communications network in the world is a constant challenge and is truly a collaborative effort.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify here today. I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have.