

**STATEMENT OF ROBERT LEGRANDE,
DEPUTY CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GOVERNMENT
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION
UNITED STATES SENATE
ON THE COMMUNICATIONS, CONSUMERS' CHOICE,
AND BROADBAND ACT OF 2006
REPORT/ORAL TESTIMONY**

June 13, 2006

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Robert LeGrande. I am a Deputy Chief Technology Officer of the District of Columbia government. I am responsible for the wireless communications infrastructure for the District government and the National Capital Region's Interoperability Communications Program. Additionally, I am the Founder and Chairperson of the National Spectrum Coalition for Public Safety.

Today, I will comment on the Communications, Consumers Choice and Broadband Deployment Act of 2006, specifically section 151; Interoperable Emergency Communications.

First I would like to take a moment and thank this committee, your staff and the Congress for their continued efforts to address our national public safety communications needs. This Act further demonstrates the Committee's



commitment to Public Safety and we appreciate the opportunity to speak in support of this legislation. The 700 MHz spectrum clearing legislation process was painful for all of us, but well worth it. We can now leverage that accomplishment and deploy interoperable public safety solutions across the nation.

The questions before us today are when and how. My immediate answers to these questions are **now** and **strategically**. As most of you know, we have many areas in the nation that lack interoperable voice communications. Catastrophic events such as 9/11, Hurricanes Isabel and Katrina and future national threats require us to expeditiously provide funding to address Public Safety's critical communications needs.

While we have many needs, we must agree on one eventual public safety communications outcome: **seamless interoperable, redundant, national network of networks that transmits video, data and voice.**

We must also agree that there is an impending multifaceted data communications problem. The vast majority of our current public safety mobile data solutions rely on commercial networks that are shared with the public. In a major event, these networks will likely fail due to excessive public and private communications demands, leaving our First Responders without mission critical data. Many jurisdictions throughout the country are attempting to address this



problem by deploying non-interoperable, private networks using disparate frequencies and differing technologies. If this trend continues, we will be here in five years trying to solve our data interoperability crisis.

Section 151 (d) (1) and Section 151 (d) (4) stated below are essential to preventing this trend because they establish funding criteria for standardized, commercially available IP based technologies being deployed in the 700 MHz spectrum.

Section 151 (d) (1)

“The Assistant Secretary shall allocate at least 25 percent of the funds made available to carry out this section to make interoperable communications system equipment grants for equipment that can utilize, or enable interoperability with systems or networks that can utilize, reallocated public safety spectrum.”

Section 151 (d) (4)

“USE OF FUNDS.—A public safety agency shall use any funds received under this subsection for the purchase of interoperable communications system equipment and infrastructure that is consistent with SAFECOM guidance, including any standards that may be referenced by SAFECOM guidance and interoperable communications system equipment and infrastructure that improves interoperability that uses IP protocol or any similar successor protocol.”

The National Capital Region Interoperability Program (NCRIP) is in its second of a five-year plan to deploy a seamless interoperable wireless broadband data network of networks throughout its 19 member jurisdictions (reference Attachment I). Our plan leverages the recently cleared 700 MHz Public Safety wideband data spectrum. The program has already established a successful prototype currently in



use daily by federal, regional, and local first responders across the District of Columbia. The NCRIP recently partnered with the Silicon Valley, San Diego and Phoenix regions to create a national network of networks for wireless broadband communications (reference Attachment II). All regions have agreed to deploy the same technology, in the same frequencies, at the same time.

Recent Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant cuts severely threaten our regions' ability to deploy this proven national wireless broadband solution. It is our collective hope that this Act will initiate full funding of the four regional programs no later than the end of calendar year 2006. This investment will provide a model that can be leveraged across the nation.

In summary, it is our strong belief that a percentage of the dollars should go toward solving Public Safety voice communication problems in high risk areas. Further, a percentage should go toward investing in solutions that will solve data interoperability communications needs. These investments will patch critical voice communications holes while investing in a scalable platform that will provide integrated video, data and Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) solutions in the future. These funds should be available and dispersed without delay.

In attendance with me today is Chief Demetrios Vlassopoulos of the District of Columbia Fire Department and Private Scott Robinson of the United States Park



Police. Both are here in support of our national program and are users of the District's city-wide public safety wireless broadband pilot network.

This network is used on a daily basis to provide mobile video surveillance, high resolution images and access to applications such as CapWIN and WebEOC.

We need your help to continue our efforts to meet all our First Responder's communications needs. Thank you for your time and we are happy to answer any of your questions.