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Enhanced 9-1-1 Legislation Passes Congress

*NENA's Never Give Up Approach Helps Pass E9-1-1 Legislation:
Support for Public Safety, Life-saving Technologies and Homeland Security*

Washington, DC – Congress passes bill to boost the nations aging and fragmented 9-1-1 system.

In the final moments of the 108th Congressional session long advocated 9-1-1 legislation that authorizes the creation of a National 9-1-1 Program Office and provides technical and financial support for our nation's local emergency call centers passed the United States Senate in the late evening hours of December 8, 2004.

Bundled into a telecommunications legislative package, H.R. 5419 included the "ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004, the "Commercial Spectrum Enhancement Act" and the "Universal Service Antideficiency Temporary Suspension Act." Supported by the National Emergency Number Association (NENA), the Enhance 911 Act (Ensuring Needed Help Arrives Near Callers Employing 911 Act), was sponsored by the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus Co-Chairs, Senators Conrad Burns (R-MT), and Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Representatives John Shimkus (R-IL), and Anna Eshoo (D-CA). NENA supported the collective package that comprised H.R. 5419

"The National Emergency Number Association is thrilled with the passing of this important measure," stated NENA's President Bill McMurray of Marin County, CA. He added, "We have fought long and hard on the principle that the same 9-1-1 service should be available to every citizen, any time, anywhere. Today is an important step to achieving that."

A tremendous win for the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus, 9-1-1 community and NENA, the legislation is one of many first in addressing shortfalls in our nation's citizen activated emergency response system. It's the first bill to be passed by the bi-partisan, bi-cameral Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus.

"We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Congressional E9-1-1 Caucus Co-Chairs, Senators Burns and Clinton and Representatives Shimkus and Eshoo," said McMurray. He added, "The leadership of the Caucus made all the difference. Like true first responders they (the Caucus) never gave up." HR. 5419 was passed after several rounds of negotiations and various legislative procedures and tactics.

Nation's 9-1-1 System Faces Budgetary and Coordination Problems

Approximately 95 percent of the nation's PSAPs have "enhanced" 9-1-1 (E9-1-1) for wireline callers, which means automated systems can identify the caller's number and physical location, and route the call to a PSAP designated for that location. But less than forty percent of the

country's call centers are capable of determining the precise location of at least some of the wireless callers dialing 9-1-1.

There are two primary reasons for this situation: the stress on local emergency response systems from the enormous growth in wireless telephony, and the improper siphoning of public funds that have been set aside to upgrade the 9-1-1 system.

As wireless phones have proliferated, so have wireless 9-1-1 calls. Depending on the local area, 25 to 60 percent of all calls to 9-1-1 come from wireless phones, for a total of nearly 140 million nationwide. Yet most local call centers lack the technology needed to pinpoint callers' location so that help can be sent quickly.

Compounding the problem nationally, in many states and localities, the money collected from wireless customers for the purpose of upgrading the 9-1-1 system has been diverted to other purposes or withheld.

The legislation is designed to speed E9-1-1 implementation and improve coordination among all levels of government, as the measure provides significant seed money to address promote best practices and technology innovations, and provide funding to assure that PSAP's are ready to deploy the vital call answering equipment.

NENA President, Bill McMurray, stated, "NENA never gave up on passing the legislation this year. We knew the stakes are far too great."

The 'ENHANCE 911 Act' a Home for the Nation's 9-1-1 Future

In passing the **ENHANCE 911 Act**, Congress recognizes that E9-1-1 implementation and planning is a priority. The establishment of a 9-1-1 Coordination Office within the Executive Branch provides a vital roadmap for our future and a home for our nation's 9-1-1 system within the Federal Government.

Anthony Haynes, chairman of the NENA Regulatory and Legislative Committee and executive director of the Tennessee Emergency Communications Board said he was pleased with the passing of this bill, saying, "A national Office provides immediate perspective and coordination of the improvement to the 9-1-1 systems across the country."

The National 9-1-1 office's main focus is that of grant administrator for the \$1.25 billion authorization provided for in the Act.

ENHANCE 911 Act Awaits President Bush's Signature

Bill McMurray closed by saying, "We encourage all government leaders to make 9-1-1 modernization a top priority. Today is an important first step we urge President Bush to sign it into law."

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A not-for-profit corporation, the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) is the only organization dedicated solely to the study, advancement, and implementation of 9-1-1 as America's universal emergency number. For more information, visit www.nena.org or www.e911institute.org