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National Emergency
Number Association



Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act (S.800) Passes in U.S. House— Makes 9-1-1 The Universal Emergency Phone Number

Columbus, Ohio (October 13, 1999)—The U.S. House of Representatives passed Senate Bill 800 (S.800) in a 424 to 2 vote yesterday, with the support of the National Emergency Number Association (NENA) and other public safety organizations. The Bill, known as the Wireless Communications and Public Safety Act of 1999, will now await a signature from President Clinton.

S.800, which passed the Senate on August 5, is most publicly known because it recognizes 9-1-1 as **the** universal emergency telephone number in the United States. This designation applies to both wireline/land line and wireless telephone services. The new legislation allows for appropriate transition periods for areas in which 9-1-1 is not in place as an emergency phone number. NENA estimates that 10 percent of the U.S. population remains without any type of 9-1-1 service.

In addition, S.800 will meet the nation's public safety and other communications needs by supporting the states in upgrading 9-1-1 infrastructure and programs, furthering deployment of wireless/cellular 9-1-1 service, and encouraging the installation and operation of seamless and reliable networks for personal wireless services.

"This Bill provides wireless users, operators and telephone companies the same protection from liability that is currently enjoyed by wireless telephone companies," noted William H. Hinkle, president of NENA. "This protection will now allow wireless carriers to move forward in providing critical life saving technology for the benefit of the American public. We encourage the president to sign this Bill."

"NENA is grateful to the members of congress, especially Representatives Tom Bliley, Billy Tauzin, John Dingell, Ed Markey, John Shimkus and Speaker Hastert, and Senators Conrad Burns, John McCain, Byron Dorgan, Majority Leader Lott and Assistant Majority Leader Nickles, who had the foresight to extend the benefits of 9-1-1 services to America's wireless users," Hinkle concluded.

The S.800 legislation is available in PDF format on the NENA web page at www.nena.org.

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The National Emergency Number Association, a not-for-profit corporation, was founded in 1982 as a result of the first three national 9-1-1 meetings and to further the goal of "One Nation, One Number." NENA has experienced tremendous growth within a short time. Its membership tops 6,700 and continues to climb with new chapters joining its present 45-chapter network.

NENA's Mission is to foster the technological advancement, availability and implementation of a universal emergency telephone number system. In carrying out its mission, NENA promotes research, planning, training and education. The protection of human life, the preservation of property, and the maintenance of general community security are among NENA's objectives.