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NENA President David Jones Testifies Before Congress
Encourages Congress to include 9-1-1 provisions in telecom reform legislation

Great Falls, MT– NENA President David Jones, ENP (Emergency Number Professional), testified before the Senate Commerce Committee today encouraging Congress to include critical 9-1-1 provisions in upcoming telecom reform legislation. Jones testified in support of the IP-Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety Act of 2005 (S 1063) but asked Congress to broaden the scope of the bill to cover services beyond VoIP.

NENA applauds the recent actions taken by the FCC in adopting its Order on E9-1-1 requirements for IP-enabled service providers but believes Congressional action in this area is needed as well. Specifically, Jones requested that the FCC be given clear regulatory authority over any service that provides a communications capability in which a customer can reasonably expect to be able to reach a PSAP when dialing 9-1-1 and that nothing be done to prevent states from imposing 9-1-1 surcharges on such services. Jones said, “In addition to establishing clear FCC regulatory authority, it is essential that Congress do nothing to compromise state and local authority to impose and collect 9-1-1 fees on all services where a customer has a reasonable expectation of being connected to 9-1-1, regardless of the type of technology.”

Jones’ testimony further suggested that Congress consider ways to facilitate state and local funding of critical 9-1-1 emergency communications systems. Last year Congress effectively acted in this regard by passing the ENHANCE 911 Act of 2004, authorizing up to \$250 million per year in grants for 9-1-1 system upgrades. However, to date no monies have been appropriated to fund such grants. Jones said, “NENA implores Congress to fund the ENHANCE 911 Act. The continued success and sustainability of our 9-1-1 system will greatly benefit from such action.”

Jones also testified in support of the provisions contained in the IP-Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety (S 1063) requiring E9-1-1 system service providers to grant access to their networks and databases to VoIP providers on a non-discriminatory basis. Additionally, his testimony supported the provision in the bill granting liability parity for IP-enabled services equivalent to that of existing non-IP enabled services. “Past experience in the deployment of E9-1-1 has shown that a lack of legal clarity on important topics, such as liability parity and non-discriminatory access to E9-1-1 capabilities, can lead to a delay in the provisioning of E9-1-1 service”, said Jones.

NENA hopes that telecom reform will be done this year and will include important 9-1-1 provisions. However, if legislation is delayed, NENA believes it is very important that the 9-1-1 provisions be included in a stand alone bill, such as a slightly modified version of the IP-Enabled Voice Communications and Public Safety Act of 2005, and considered by Congress before the session ends this year.

On Monday, August 29th, NENA sent a letter to Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK) and Daniel Inouye (D-HI), the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Commerce Committee, echoing the sentiments expressed in today's testimony. That letter, along with a copy of today's testimony is available on the nena website at www.nena.org.

Earlier in the day, Jones participated in an event sponsored by the E9-1-1 Institute honoring Senator Conrad Burns (R-MT) for his continued leadership and support of 9-1-1. Jones stated, "The 9-1-1 Community has known no greater friend than Senator Conrad Burns. I sincerely thank you for the continued leadership you have provided on 9-1-1 issues over the years. NENA represents the national 9-1-1 community as the 'Voice of 9-1-1', but if there is truly one voice of 9-1-1 in the halls of Congress, surely it is Senator Conrad Burns."

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About NENA

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. With more than 7,000 members in 46 chapters across the U.S. and Canada, NENA serves as "The Voice of 9-1-1" through policy advocacy, the establishment of national standards, certification and testing programs, and a wide variety of educational offerings. For more information, visit www.nena.org.