



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
Office of the Director
145 N Street NE, Washington, DC 20530

COPS

July 28, 2017

Mr. Ajit Pai, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Proceeding Number 15-94

Dear Chairman Pai,

The Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu National Blue Alert Act of 2015, Pub. L. No. 114-12 (Blue Alert Act or Act), was enacted to establish a national Blue Alert communications network within the [U.S.] Department of Justice to issue Blue Alerts through the initiation, facilitation, and promotion of Blue Alert plans, in coordination with States, units of local government, law enforcement agencies, and other appropriate entities.

The Act is named in honor of two fallen New York City Police Department (NYPD) officers who were ambushed in 2014, and is intended to facilitate rapid dissemination of information to law enforcement agencies, the media, and the public that will aid in:

- *Apprehending violent criminals who have killed or seriously injured a law enforcement officer in the line of duty;*
- *Finding an officer who is missing in connection with his or her official duties; or*
- *Sharing notice of an imminent and credible threat that an individual intends to cause the serious injury or death of a law enforcement officer.*

In September 2016, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) was assigned the honor of overseeing implementation of the Blue Alert Act and the COPS Office Director was designated as the National Blue Alert Coordinator. The COPS Office has a long history of supporting officer safety and wellness. Since 1994, we have invested more than \$14 billion to advance community policing, including grants to more than 13,000 state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to fund the hiring of approximately 129,000 officers. We could not be prouder to now have Blue Alerts in our portfolio.

Anyone who would kill or seriously harm law enforcement officers in the line of duty poses an inherently elevated and unique danger to all. Any delay in capture, could result in the death of other law enforcement officers and nearby innocent civilians. Violent attacks on law enforcement officers constitute an assault on the American way of life and erode the actual and perceived safety of affected communities and beyond.

Recent ambush-style attacks on law enforcement have shocked our nation and highlighted the inherently disturbing nature of violent attacks on law enforcement officers. Our nation's law enforcement officers take great risks to maintain our safety, and we as a nation must do all we can to increase theirs. Blue Alert plans provide an important framework for quick response. Our nation's emergency alerting infrastructure is a valuable resource that can expedite information sharing and facilitate the quick apprehension of dangerous criminals who pose an immediate threat to law enforcement and communities they serve.

Time and again the public has played a critical role in assisting law enforcement in maintaining safety. But, in order to assist, the public must be informed. Blue Alerts, using our nation's emergency alerting infrastructure, can get critical information out to the public and law enforcement alike. Blue Alerts can provide an immediate warning to thousands or even millions of innocent persons in an area where an extremely violent offender is thought to be. Warnings provide instructions to keep innocent persons safe and information on what to do if a suspect is spotted.

The Emergency Alert System (EAS) stands alone as our nation's premier alerting mechanism for public emergencies and warnings. The absence of a dedicated EAS event code for Blue Alerts requires states and local law enforcement agencies to utilize an existing generic Law Enforcement Warning (LEW) event code in an ad hoc manner. Despite its serious sounding name, the LEW event code is often used for routine informational purposes such as hazardous road conditions and road closures. Consequently, there is often a perceived lack of urgency associated with the LEW event code. A dedicated event code would allow for promulgation of specific rules to ensure that Blue Alerts are handled in a specific manner by participating media outlets and wireless carriers.

A dedicated EAS event code for Blue Alerts would streamline Blue Alert plans across the nation and will help to integrate existing plans into a coordinated national framework. Such a code would also serve as the central and organizing element for Blue Alert plans coast-to-coast and greatly facilitate the work of the National Blue Alert Network. Law enforcement stakeholders from around the country have cited the absence of a dedicated Blue Alert EAS event code as a key limitation to broader adoption and use of Blue Alert plans

The COPS Office thanks you and the FCC for your leadership on this issue of national importance and strongly supports the creation of a dedicated EAS event code for Blue Alerts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Russ" with a stylized flourish at the end.

Russell Washington
Acting Director