

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

1101

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE

2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115

Majority (202) 225-2927
Minority (202) 225-3641

November 2, 2015

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We urge you to make sure that emergency alerts are available to all Americans—regardless of what language they speak. The Commission first asked whether the Emergency Alert System (EAS) should include alerts in multiple languages nearly a decade ago. Indeed, the Commission has reviewed this issue three times and has a robust record on which to make a decision. The time has come for the Commission to act on this critically important issue.

With extreme weather events due to climate change on the rise, it is paramount that all people in the United States have equal access to lifesaving emergency alerts. As of 2011, the Census Bureau reports that 21 percent of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home. Our country's experiences with Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy make the importance of these alerts all too evident. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) supports the extension of alerting to the non-English speaking population, and the State of Florida already broadcasts emergency alerts in both English and Spanish.

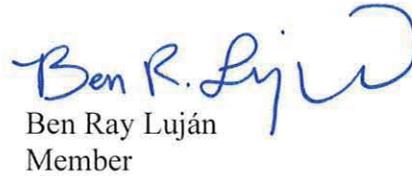
The FCC and industry have already taken the initial steps towards implementing a multi-lingual emergency alert system. EAS participants are now required to make sure the devices they support can receive and retransmit Common Alerting Protocol (CAP)-formatted EAS alert messages. The Commission itself has noted that CAP allows for the inclusion of multiple translations of an alert. We commend the FCC for making this first-step toward equally protecting non-English speakers. But we believe the FCC should take the next step before the next disaster strikes.

We appreciate the FCC's ongoing efforts to protect the U.S. population during times of emergency and crisis. We look forward to the FCC ensuring that all members of our society have equal access to these lifesaving alerts.

Sincerely,



G. K. Butterfield
Member



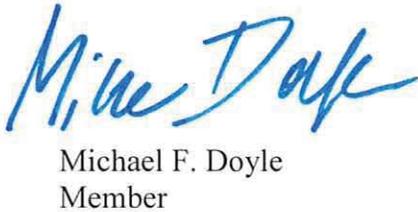
Ben Ray Luján
Member



Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member



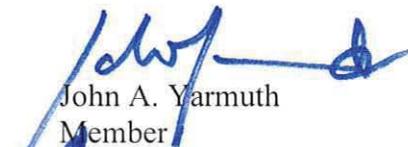
Anna-G. Eshoo
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications &
Technology



Michael F. Doyle
Member



Peter Welch
Member



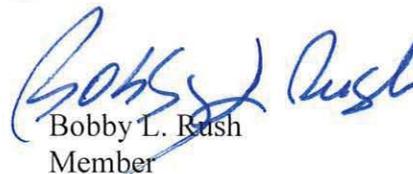
John A. Yarmuth
Member



Yvette D. Clarke
Member



Dave Loebsack
Member



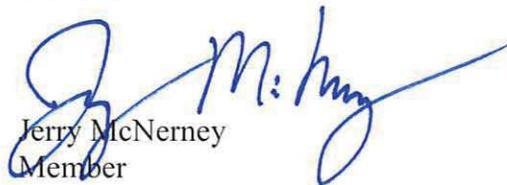
Bobby L. Rush
Member



Diana DeGette
Member



Doris Matsui
Member



Jerry McNerney
Member

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
November 2, 2015
Page 3

cc: The Honorable Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission

The Honorable Michael O'Rielly
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 22, 2015

The Honorable G.K. Butterfield
U.S. House of Representatives
2305 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Butterfield:

Thank you for your November 2, 2015 letter urging the Commission to ensure that emergency alerts are available to the entire public, regardless of the languages they speak. We at the Commission share the Committee's interest in promoting the delivery of alerts from the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to as wide an audience as possible, including those who communicate in a language other than English, who have a limited understanding of the English language, as well as to persons with disabilities. As you note, the Commission and industry took an initial step by requiring that EAS alerts be delivered in the Common Alerting Protocol, a common language that allows alert initiators to provide alerts in multiple languages. The Commission has taken several further steps recently to advance this important goal:

- On November 19, 2015, we adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in which we proposed changes to improve WEA message content and to ensure that the messages reach those people for whom an alert is relevant. As part of this community focus on alerting, the NPRM seeks comment on whether advances in technology will allow WEA to be offered in languages other than English, and on the extent to which supplementing alert text with multimedia will contribute to alert accessibility.
- On September 22, 2015, the Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau adopted an order granting ECHO (Emergency, Community, Health and Outreach) Minnesota, a program and service of Twin Cities Public Television, a waiver of certain EAS and WEA rules to allow the broadcast or transmission of multilingual public service announcements that contain a simulated WEA and EAS Attention Signals and EAS codes as part of a public outreach program to educate English and non-English speakers in the state of Minnesota about WEA, EAS and other emergency alerts.
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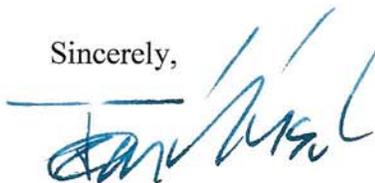
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- Currently, the Commission has an order on circulation that addresses the Petition for Immediate Interim Relief filed by the Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association, the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ, Inc., and the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council.

The Commission continues to refine and improve the efficacy of the EAS and WEA to facilitate the delivery of life and property-saving alerts to the entire public, regardless of the language they speak or any vision or hearing impairments they may have. Our goal, through our recently circulated order, is to gain a much fuller understanding of what States, localities, and individual EAS Participants are doing – and can do in the future - to facilitate the distribution of multilingual alert content to their communities, and to work with the communities to further advance their abilities to reach populations where English is not well understood. We will continue to work to enable such efforts, both locally and within the broader context of the nationwide EAS system.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", is written over a horizontal line.

Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 22, 2015

The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke
U.S. House of Representatives
2351 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Clarke:

Thank you for your November 2, 2015 letter urging the Commission to ensure that emergency alerts are available to the entire public, regardless of the languages they speak. We at the Commission share the Committee's interest in promoting the delivery of alerts from the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to as wide an audience as possible, including those who communicate in a language other than English, who have a limited understanding of the English language, as well as to persons with disabilities. As you note, the Commission and industry took an initial step by requiring that EAS alerts be delivered in the Common Alerting Protocol, a common language that allows alert initiators to provide alerts in multiple languages. The Commission has taken several further steps recently to advance this important goal:

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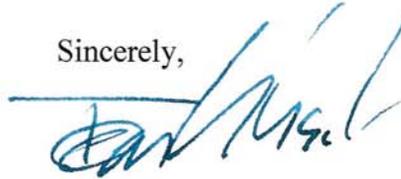
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The Commission continues to refine and improve the efficacy of the EAS and WEA to facilitate the delivery of life and property-saving alerts to the entire public, regardless of the language they speak or any vision or hearing impairments they may have. Our goal, through our recently circulated order, is to gain a much fuller understanding of what States, localities, and individual EAS Participants are doing – and can do in the future - to facilitate the distribution of multilingual alert content to their communities, and to work with the communities to further advance their abilities to reach populations where English is not well understood. We will continue to work to enable such efforts, both locally and within the broader context of the nationwide EAS system.

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 22, 2015

The Honorable Diana DeGette
U.S. House of Representatives
2368 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman DeGette:

Thank you for your November 2, 2015 letter urging the Commission to ensure that emergency alerts are available to the entire public, regardless of the languages they speak. We at the Commission share the Committee's interest in promoting the delivery of alerts from the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to as wide an audience as possible, including those who communicate in a language other than English, who have a limited understanding of the English language, as well as to persons with disabilities. As you note, the Commission and industry took an initial step by requiring that EAS alerts be delivered in the Common Alerting Protocol, a common language that allows alert initiators to provide alerts in multiple languages. The Commission has taken several further steps recently to advance this important goal:

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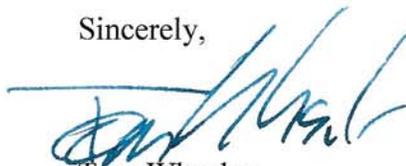
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 22, 2015

The Honorable Mike Doyle
U.S. House of Representatives
239 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Doyle:

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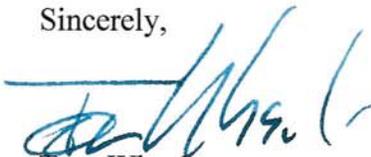
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

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THE CHAIRMAN

December 22, 2015

The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Eshoo:

Thank you for your November 2, 2015 letter urging the Commission to ensure that emergency alerts are available to the entire public, regardless of the languages they speak. We at the Commission share the Committee's interest in promoting the delivery of alerts from the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alerts (WEA) to as wide an audience as possible, including those who communicate in a language other than English, who have a limited understanding of the English language, as well as to persons with disabilities. As you note, the Commission and industry took an initial step by requiring that EAS alerts be delivered in the Common Alerting Protocol, a common language that allows alert initiators to provide alerts in multiple languages. The Commission has taken several further steps recently to advance this important goal:

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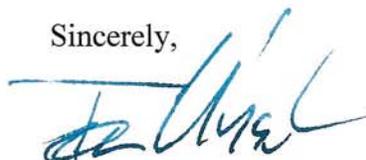
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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

December 22, 2015

The Honorable Dave Loebsack
U.S. House of Representatives
1527 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Loebsack:

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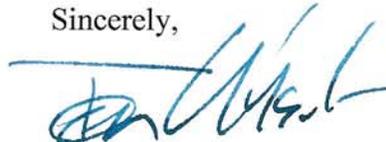
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