

Framework for Next Generation 911 Deployment Comments

I am in support of the NG-911 plan because throughout the proposal, many of the interests at stake, the possible innovations, and the numerous challenges are presented very well. All in all, I finished reading the proposal with a sense that 911 can better serve the nation if it is updated and renovated to comply with today's technology advancements.

Throughout the proposal it is very clear that one main interest is providing more convenient services for disabled people. Measures like the Twenty First Century Act which focuses on ensuring accessibility of disabled persons to the NG-911 services are really important in implementing this plan. It is important that emergency services be truly accessible to all, especially considering that today it is more possible than it used to be due to technological progress. One of the best ways to regulate effectively in my view as a citizen is to form committees to address the impact a proposed service or action will have on various groups of people and also survey them for their voice in the matter.

I thought about how sometimes it is inconvenient to call a landline at a time or a place where it would be better to communicate without volume. It can be quicker and could actually be safer if someone is in close proximity to the person they would like to report and they can simply text instead of alerting the person unnecessarily while making a vocal call.

The proposal is also very accessible to everyday people, using laymen terms when possible and clearly explaining current 911 procedures and proposed NG-911 services. I valued this because I think having a better understanding of how 911 currently works is helpful in appreciating the complexities of the system as it exists. Hopefully that will translate into being more patient and open to whatever modifications are made, even if some of what is proposed is not possible at the moment because of resources, bringing together various telecommunications

systems, etcetera. I think there is much that still needs to be considered. For example, the issue of liability if and when there are glitches in the system during the transition: glitches are expected and understandable but it is of a great concern to me that someone might go without the help they need when they need it due to technical difficulties. Hopefully, the transition period will include various mechanisms that are reliable enough to support the NG-911 system if there is a glitch.

The proposal explains how the current 911 system has been adapted in some ways but that it is still lacking in terms of what communications are today and what they were like when the 911 system was created. An interest that is present throughout is the objective regarding bridging the gap between the expectations of the public and the actual capabilities of the 911 system. I am not sure how representative my view is of the general population but I personally was pretty surprised at how much I did not know about how 911 currently operates and the proposal was just intending to give a brief overview. I think this is important to realize as a citizen because it helps one understand that a system as complex as the present one will take a lot of work and energy to make it compatible with many technological forms available today. It is not as simple as it seems to be able to call in to a nationwide number and receive help from emergency services in your area, thus, it will not be quick and easy to make 911 available in text or video. Liability, the role of states' authority in controlling 911 in their jurisdiction, and challenge of maintaining confidentiality in newly available media are just some of the concerns presented that stood out to me. But to each of these challenges seems to be a very positive outcome if the right level of supervision and creativity is achieved: 1) while liability could become more of a risk while a transitional period is instituted, the new system might actually save more lives and respond to emergency situations more efficiently, 2) although the need for

uniformity in such a system might require more of a federal role and possibly interfere with authority most often left to the states, federal powers might be better positioned to see on a national level what is needed overall to suit each locale and be better positioned to offer the resources, and 3) although having more forms of communication, especially in the beginning stages, could compromise the confidentiality of private medical information or classified information regarding a crime or suspect, having these mediums can increase the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency health care and provide more evidence and information for police investigations.

The proposal also asks that comments be given regarding the benefits and drawbacks of competition in the 911 services. Putting those two things in the same sentence makes me rather nervous because on the whole, capitalism in our society means that most advertising is somewhat false and there are often hidden fees and a lot of catches in the small print. Maybe that is an overly cynical approach but I am quite apprehensive about competition in 911 services. However, realistically, competition exists in many areas in which although it is profitable and beneficial to society as a whole, can be harmful to individuals. For example, competition in healthcare, specifically pharmaceuticals and health insurance can seem very unappealing. It will be very important for 911 services to be carefully overseen to be sure that if competition is allowed in the NG-911 system, it does not compromise the purpose and execution of providing emergency care for everyone regardless of their economic status. The legislature is best positioned to regulate and make sure the 911 services focus their attentions on serving the people first even at the expense of profit.

I would also like to comment on whether there should be a deadline for when all of the system should be completely switched over. The proposal mentions an important point that people will expect their experience to be uniform and that it could be dangerous to have new services implemented in one city, for example, but not quite up and running in another, and people are not informed about which is currently working or not. I thought about it in terms of what if a person texted an emergency message when they are in different city from when they first used the service. The time it takes for them to figure out their mistake (if at all) could be deadly.

I think it is important that all of the systems be switched at the same time and at the same pace, even if everything cannot be done all in one cycle. For instance, all systems should get text messaging at the same time with room for a few exceptions if that is not completely possible.

All in all, I think the proposal has much potential and will mean a lot to each individual who contacts 911 services if it is implemented.