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**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD**

**Before the House Homeland Security Committee**

***Public Safety Communications: Are the Needs of Our  
First Responders Being Met?***

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Thank you Chairman King and Ranking Member Thompson for the opportunity to provide this statement for the record regarding public safety communications. This truly is a critical time for our nation in terms of ensuring first responders have the tools necessary to conduct the business of saving lives and property during a time of crisis.

Established in 1974, NEMA represents the emergency management directors of the 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia. These professionals are responsible to their governors for all-hazards emergency preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery from all emergencies, disasters, and threats to the homeland. NEMA is proud to stand with our colleagues of the Public Safety Alliance and larger public safety community testifying today.

The state emergency management directors of NEMA provide national leadership and expertise in comprehensive emergency management; serve as a vital emergency management information and assistance resource; and advance continuous improvements in emergency management through strategic partnerships. Working arm-in-arm with our public safety partners extends far beyond the emergency management industry. As coordinators of emergency response functions, the state emergency managers recognize the need for Congress to take action immediately.

Even though we are not direct users of the system, many state agencies do utilize aspects of the system such as P25 trunked and interoperable solutions every day. There are numerous examples in the northeast when 800 MHz or 700 MHz channels were used by multiple agencies to provide communications across all emergency support functions (ESF). The D-Block will allow the next extension of this network to include data and video for the same core groups responding and recovering from a disaster. Perhaps one of the most important elements of the Public Safety system is the mission critical nature of what emergency managers accomplish on a daily basis.

NEMA strongly supports the effort to prevent the auction of the D-Block and see that the public safety has all necessary tools to effectively respond to an incident. This nationwide broadband network remains critical to ensuring our police, fire, medical, and emergency professionals have access to modern and reliable communications capabilities.

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has licensed 10 MHz of radio spectrum in the 700 MHz band to public safety for broadband services. Many national organizations agree this 10 MHz is insufficient to meet public safety's bandwidth needs. Public safety needs more spectrum.

For economic and technical reasons, additional public safety broadband spectrum should be in the same band as the current public safety broadband spectrum. Such spectrum exists and is available. The D-Block is two complimentary segments of radio spectrum comprising 10 MHz in the upper 700 MHz spectral band, located directly adjacent to the spectrum currently licensed to public safety for broadband services. The D-Block is also the only substantial contiguous spectrum remaining in the 700 MHz band yet to be licensed, so no licensed users would be displaced. Should public safety be forced to build an interoperable network in two separate bands, additional fiscal challenges would result due to the need of new technologies to bridge the disparate systems required to fulfill the comparable need of the singular D-Block.

Under current statute, the FCC is required to auction the D-Block spectrum for commercial services. Once auctioned, the D-Block would be encumbered and out of public safety's reach for the foreseeable future; in practical effect, it would be gone forever. To prevent such an auction, NEMA has joined the PSA and numerous other organizations in urging Congress to pass legislation allocating the D-Block to public safety and providing a funding mechanism to aid in the build-out and operation of a nationwide broadband network. The PSA includes associations representing police, sheriffs, fire chiefs, emergency medical personnel, and emergency management.

NEMA remains appreciative of Chairman King, Ranking Member Thompson, and the growing list of co-sponsors for HR 607, the *Broadband for First Responders Act of 2011*. We were also thankful for the President's fiscal year 2012 budget which provides \$10 billion to build and fund the network using the proceeds from the auction of other spectrum. Under these "incentive auctions," television broadcasters would relinquish their rights to certain spectrum in exchange for a portion of the proceeds when the spectrum is auctioned.

Fortunately, Congress has the means by which to ensure this asset is available thereby securing the lives of millions of Americans. This network would give public safety invaluable data services such as photos, diagrams, and video, an infrastructure built to withstand natural hazards, and nationwide coverage. By standing with the PSA, NEMA joins countless organizations in supporting this effort and is pleased to fully support Congress directing the FCC to allocate the D-Block spectrum to public safety.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement for the record on this critical issue. As a member of the Public Safety Alliance, NEMA is proud to stand with our colleagues in public safety as we work to ensure the allocation of the D-Block. We look forward to working with your Committee as this issue moves forward and hope you will utilize the expertise of our members should the need arise.

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