

Chairman Dingell, Subcommittee on Telecommunications and the Internet Hearing entitled "Issues in Emergency Communications: A Legislative Hearing on H.R. 3403, the 911 Modernization and Public Safety Act of 2007"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND THE INTERNET HEARING ENTITLED "ISSUES IN EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS: A LEGISLATIVE HEARING ON H.R. 3403, THE 911 MODERNIZATION AND PUBLIC SAFETY ACT OF 2007"

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Few things are more important than the public safety of our citizens, and one critical component of our Nation's public safety network is 9-1-1 service. When faced with any threat or emergency, Americans expect to be able to pick up the phone, dial 9-1-1 and obtain an immediate response no matter what kind of phone or technology they use to make the call.

As the ways people make phone calls have changed, Congress has been mindful to ensure that the 9-1-1 system also evolves. For example, in 1999, recognizing the widespread and growing use of wireless phones, Congress passed legislation to ensure that consumers could reach 9-1-1 from their cell phones.

An increasing number of Americans now use a technology called "Voice over Internet Protocol," or VoIP, to make phone calls. It is therefore appropriate to once again update our laws so that consumers can be confident of receiving emergency assistance when they dial 9-1-1 from a VoIP connection.

I commend those companies that control access to the 9-1-1 system for not using their dominant position to profit from the safety of the public. This is consistent with my strong belief that when it comes to the 9-1-1 infrastructure, our focus should be on ensuring consumer access to public safety rather than on using the 9-1-1 system for competitive advantage. I am confident that as we examine the important piece of legislation before us, this wise course of focusing on the safety of our citizens will continue.

I want to express my appreciation to Rep. Gordon for his tireless efforts to bring H.R. 3403, the 911 Modernization and Public Safety Act of 2007, before the Subcommittee. Rep. Gordon, along with his staff, has labored long and hard over the last several years to ensure 9-1-1 access for VoIP customers, and we commend his dedication and hard work.

I want to also commend the other members of the 9-1-1 Caucus, Representatives Eshoo, Shimkus, and Pickering, for their ongoing work in this important area. Their efforts continue to raise awareness about the ongoing need to improve and advance our 9-1-1 system.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses about how we can ensure that all consumers using any technology have the best possible access to our Nation's emergency 9-1-1 system.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce
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