



The Honorable Brett Guthrie, Chairman
The Honorable Frank Pallone, Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

January 21, 2026

Dear Chairman and Ranking Member,

As your committee considers reauthorization legislation for the FirstNet Authority (FNA) prior to 2027, we urge you to consider critical updates that will improve the effectiveness of the program through enhanced oversight, accountability, competition, and transparency regarding the billions of dollars that it spends. To be clear, we strongly support the FirstNet concept and seek to improve its structure. Our primary objective in seeking these changes is to ensure that the FirstNet Authority is working to the benefit of *all* public-safety users.

Congress's original vision of FirstNet, a standalone, publicly-owned network exclusively for public safety use, was laudable. The reality of the effectiveness of this model is now apparent: it has not worked as envisioned. The reauthorization process represents an opportunity to improve this critical program.

First, it is imperative that any reauthorization measure does not permanently extend the FirstNet mandate. As we have seen over the past decade, technology and the needs of the public safety community have evolved dramatically. FirstNet should be revisited and updated over time, not put on a permanent autopilot. We urge that FirstNet's reauthorization remain on a Congressionally mandated cycle.

Second, we urge the Congress to ensure that the FirstNet program benefit all of public safety, not just the customers of a single commercial carrier. The fact that all of the FirstNet Authority's multi-billion-dollar spending has gone to only one carrier, AT&T, has been exposed as problematic in recent years. When the AT&T network went down in February of 2024, AT&T's FirstNet customers lost service. This is a risk our first responders simply cannot take. They need consistency and reliability for their communications networks. Many of our members now depend on multiple carriers to ensure reliability and resiliency. In the years since FirstNet's contract was awarded to AT&T, other carriers have developed their own public safety offerings. This competition has resulted in a better product for our public safety users. Congress should ensure that all infrastructure paid for with FNA funds is being used to the benefit of all public safety users, not just the customers of a single carrier.

Accountability must also be prioritized in the new reauthorization measure. In recent years, the Inspector General for the Department of Commerce has issued multiple reports highlighting a lack of transparency and accountability within FirstNet and particularly with regard to AT&T's compliance with the FirstNet contract, including accusations that requested data was altered or not provided. This is unacceptable. To this end, we urge policymakers to include enhanced reporting and accountability requirements in the reauthorization measure, including:

- Reporting on the use and capacity of Band 14.
- Providing a full range and categorization of FirstNet subscribers including public safety, fire, EMS, private companies, etc.
- Disallow the use of government funds to support contractors, events, and marketing for any carrier.

Finally, we urge that policymakers include a provision that repeals grant/procurement requirements that favors AT&T given its exclusive partnership with FirstNet. This practice is outdated given the advancement of public safety communications options, and ultimately benefits a single corporate entity, not the public safety community.

As previously stated, our goal in making these recommendations is developing a stronger, more resilient public safety communications network. We believe that the experience of the past decade makes clear that changes must be made.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Norman".

Jeff Norman
Milwaukee Police Department
President, Major Cities Chiefs Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris West".

Sheriff Chris West
Canadian County, OK
President, National Sheriffs' Association

CC: The Honorable Richard Hudson, Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology

The Honorable Doris Matsui, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Communications and Technology