



August 28, 2025

The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chair, Committee on Energy and Commerce
United State House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
United State House of Representatives
2125 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Guthrie and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) and Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), representing Sheriffs and Chiefs across the nation, we urge the Committee to pause and ask the tough questions we set forth in this letter before considering the reauthorization and future of the FirstNet Authority (FNA). This should not be perceived as opposition to FirstNet. Rather, it is a call for careful oversight to ensure the network continues to honor Congressional intent and meet the needs of all jurisdictions urban, rural, and tribal alike. We respectfully ask that the Committee not rubber-stamp any approval or reauthorization without fully understanding what FirstNet is doing and even more critically, what it is not doing. Congress needs to ensure that FirstNet operates with integrity and remains responsive to the needs of the first responder community.

Nearly twenty-five years after the tragic events of 9/11, and almost fifteen years since Congress created the FNA, it is time to carefully evaluate whether the Authority is fulfilling its original statutory mission. Sheriffs and Chiefs alike support the mission of FirstNet to provide reliable, interoperable public safety communications to all first responders, regardless of geography, affiliation, or carrier. Congress has an obligation to ensure that billions of taxpayer dollars invested in this program are delivering real results and that the needs of every community are being met.

Recent oversight reports suggest this is not the case. The Department of Commerce's Office of Inspector General (OIG) has documented troubling conduct within the FNA, including obstruction of audits, withholding or altering of requested documents, resistance to oversight, and retaliation against staff who cooperated with investigators. NSA and MCCA have long advocated for transparency and accountability from FirstNet. These findings raise serious concerns about transparency and accountability. Earlier OIG reviews also found that contract modifications were poorly managed, that network coverage was overstated at cell edges, that device connections were not adequately verified, and that emergency continuity planning was insufficient, as seen during the Maui wildfires.

These are not insignificant matters. They go directly to whether the FNA is delivering on its promise to law enforcement and other first responders. Congress must ensure that FirstNet is not operating as an exclusive arm of a single commercial provider but is instead meeting the broader public safety mandate for which it was created. Public safety communications are too vital to be limited, opaque, or unaccountable.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce hold a hearing to examine the reauthorization and future of the FirstNet Authority. This hearing will provide Congress the opportunity to hear directly from Sheriffs, Chiefs, and other first responders to assess whether the FNA is achieving its mission and to demand accountability for the billions of taxpayer dollars invested.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued commitment to supporting those who protect our communities every day. We stand ready to work with you to ensure that FirstNet fulfills its original promise and provides the communications that all first responders need and deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Thompson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jonathan Thompson
Executive Director & CEO
National Sheriffs' Association

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Cooper', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Laura Cooper
Executive Director
Major Cities Chiefs Association