

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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**Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman**  
**Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**“Creating an Interoperable Public Safety Network”**  
**Subcommittee on Communications and Technology**  
**May 25, 2011**

Today, we will consider the challenge of providing public safety with a nationwide interoperable broadband network. This is a timely hearing. The tenth anniversary of 9-11 is fast approaching. Our goal should be to have legislation on the President’s desk before then as a tribute to the brave first responders who risked their lives to save others.

Although there is broad agreement that we need to get this done, there are different views on the best way forward. Some want the FCC to auction the D block to a wireless provider and encourage collaboration between the winning bidder and public safety. Others want Congress to reallocate the D block to public safety.

Both approaches could work, but recent developments appear to favor reallocation. The reallocation approach is strongly preferred by public safety leaders and President Obama, and it has bipartisan support in the House and Senate.

In particular, I want to commend Senator Rockefeller and Senator Hutchison for their leadership. Senator Rockefeller has been a tireless champion of the reallocation approach and has put forth a discussion draft with Senator Hutchison that is worthy of our careful consideration. Their bipartisan draft bill goes a long way towards addressing concerns about governance, accountability, interoperability, and how we pay for the public safety network.

Last month, I approached Chairman Upton and Chairman Walden and suggested that we emulate our Senate counterparts and work together on a bipartisan House bill that would provide for a nationwide public safety network and make new spectrum available through incentive auctions. I hope they will take us up on this offer.

I appreciate the fact that doing this right is complex and challenging. But with the tenth anniversary of 9-11 fast approaching, we need to settle on a path forward and move quickly. There is no reason why Congress cannot act before this somber anniversary.

This hearing is an important step in this process. We have a panel of distinguished experts before us today, and I look forward to their testimony.