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May 18, 2011

The Honorable Congressman Blumenauer
U.S. House of Representatives
House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Blumenauer:
On behalf of our members, I ask you to please cosponsor H.R. 607, the Broadband for First Responders Act of 2011. This bill, introduced by Representatives Peter King (R-NY) and Bennie Thompson (D-MS), will ensure that public safety organizations have the necessary spectrum to develop a nationwide public safety interoperable wireless broadband network.
The broadband revolution presents America's fire service with the opportunity to take advantage of new technology to greatly enhance public safety communications. For example, wireless broadband access will enable the development and widespread adoption of devices to track firefighters inside burning buildings; allow smart buildings to broadcast information about a fire to a fire chief's cell phone; allow paramedics to share a patient's vitals remotely with medical staff at a hospital, and much more. In order to access this new technology across the country, the federal government must support the development of a nationwide public safety interoperable wireless broadband network.
Currently, public safety has been licensed 10 MHz of spectrum to develop a nationwide public safety wireless broadband system. There is another block of 10 MHz of spectrum (the "D Block") adjacent to public safety's spectrum. H.R. 607 would allocate the D Block to public safety which could work with the private sector to develop a nationwide public safety interoperable wireless broadband network using 20 MHz of spectrum. Unfortunately, current law directs the FCC to auction the D Block to a commercial bidder.
H.R. 607 will prevent the auction of the D Block, and instead allocate it directly to public safety to build out its nationwide wireless broadband network. Considering that there is a shortage of spectrum, H.R. 607 presents public safety with its only opportunity to obtain the critical spectrum that it needs to bring cutting-edge technology to America's firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical personnel.
I urge you to cosponsor H.R. 607, so that public safety can develop a nationwide public safety interoperable wireless broadband network to more effectively protect the American public. This is a one-time only opportunity to get it right. Your help is essential.
Sincerely,

Tay Robertson, Fire Chief
President, Oregon Fire Chiefs Association