



Reauthorize the First Responder Network Authority

Background:

The 9/11 Commission Report identified the need for improved interoperable communications between first responders and recommended a nationwide public safety wireless broadband network. To address this recommendation, Congress established the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) by passing *The Middle-Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012* (P.L. 112-96).

FirstNet is operated via a highly successful public private partnership. Per P.L. 112-96, in March 2017, FirstNet awarded a 25-year contract through an open bidding process to a private sector partner, AT&T, to deploy FirstNet's network. AT&T deployed this network with final operating capabilities in March 2023. FirstNet is now tasked with maintaining, improving and upgrading the network.

The FirstNet has been a game changer in public safety communications and has excelled at addressing the public safety communications problems identified by the 9/11 Commission. FirstNet's creation of a national public safety broadband network has given first responders priority and preemption on their own spectrum and allowed multiple agencies to communicate within and across jurisdictions.

First responders use FirstNet's network to enhance situational awareness; ensure coordinated response across multiple jurisdictions; securely share and exchange mission critical information; and power apps and devices that deliver actionable data. FirstNet's network has vastly improved public safety communications at numerous major public events and disasters where communications networks would have historically been overwhelmed.

Issue:

The FirstNet Authority, the public side of FirstNet, is facing a February 22, 2027 sunset. This sunset creates a very uncertain future for all the advances made in public safety communications since FirstNet was established. In February 2022 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report, *Public-Safety Broadband Network: Congressional Action Required to Ensure Network Continuity* (GAO-22-104915). This report found that if Congress does not act, the continued operation of the national public safety broadband network would be jeopardized and could result in significant disruption for first responders who rely on the network for emergency response.

Solution:

On April 20, 2026, the House of Representatives passed H.R.7386, the First Responder Network Authority Reauthorization Act of 2026. This bill would reauthorize the FirstNet Authority through 2037. The NVFC strongly supports this bill. As of May 4, 2026, the Senate has not introduced FirstNet reauthorization legislation, nor has it acted on H.R. 7386. Please support Senate passage of H.R. 7386 or the passage of similar Senate legislation to ensure that the FirstNet Authority does not sunset in February 2027.

For more information or questions please contact the NVFC's Chief of Legislative and Regulatory Affairs, Ryan Woodward at Ryan@NVFC.org