



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

NEWS from Fire Fighters

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For Immediate Release
April 15, 2008

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IAFF Urges House Scrutiny of Auction to Create Public Safety Communications Network

Washington, D.C. – International Association of Fire Fighters General President Harold A. Schaitberger issued this statement on today’s House Energy and Commerce Committee hearing on the Federal Communications Commission’s auction to create a communications network for first responders:

“The 9/11 Commission, which issued its findings in 2004, recommended that the nation’s public safety agencies be provided a dedicated portion of the radio spectrum to improve our nation’s response to natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina and terrorist attacks like the horrific event that occurred on September, 11, 2001, which killed 343 of our FDNY members.

“The initial attempt to dedicate the spectrum and provide the infrastructure needed to make it useful – the auction of the D-Block of radio spectrum that opened January 24 – failed miserably.

“Oversight of the FCC auction by the House Energy and Commerce Committee is crucial to moving this process forward. Today’s hearing should help lawmakers and the public safety communities understand why an auction of the D-Block was unsuccessful and how it can be successful in the near future.

“Questions surrounding the original proposal for the D-Block spectrum and the quagmire of rules and conditions established by the Public Safety Spectrum Trust need to be answered.

“The IAFF has remained an independent and active voice in moving this critical issue forward. We declined to endorse the Trust’s proposal because it did not adequately address current shortcomings in public safety communications. Any potential public safety network must be accessible, reliable and affordable for the agencies and taxpayers it serves.

“Even as we’re now four years removed from the 9/11 Commission’s recommendations, creation of an interoperable communications network appears far from complete. We urge quick action by the Committee to push for a strong proposal for a reliable public safety network that will truly make our homeland safer.”

The International Association of Fire Fighters, headquartered in Washington, DC, represents more than 288,000 full-time professional fire fighters and paramedics who provide emergency medical response to 80 percent of the population in the United States and Canada. More information is available at www.iaff.org

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