

## Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and Chairman Peter King (R-NY) Introduce Bill to Fund Communications Equipment for First Responders

The horrific attacks of September 11, 2001 brought to light a massive communications crisis concerning America's emergency response system and wireless communications. The Help Emergency Responders Operate Emergency Systems (HEROES) Act helps address this serious problem.

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Washington, DC -- Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and House Homeland Security Chairman Peter King (R-NY), introduced the Help Emergency Responders Operate Emergency Systems (HEROES) Act. Together, they are fighting to ensure that First Responders, true heroes of our nation, have the communications equipment to do their jobs and that the already overburdened local taxpayers do not have to unfairly pay for an unfunded federal mandate.

"Immediately following the horrific September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the capacity of our nation's radio and communications networks was overwhelmed. This not only meant despair for individuals looking for family members, this also meant that First Responders were not able to coordinate or communicate their efforts to save lives and respond as effectively. We must make sure that never happens again," said Congressman Rothman.

In 2004, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) ensured more efficient use of the communications spectrum and greater spectrum access for First Responders. This federal mandate is known as the "Narrowband Mandate," which forces all First Responders to upgrade their communications equipment and spectrum licenses by January 1, 2013 to avoid the communications pitfalls in the aftermath of 9/11. This issue was highlighted by the "Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007," which included provisions to aid states and local governments in complying with the 2013 deadline. Unfortunately, the funding for the FCC mandate and

elements of the 9/11 Commission Act has been drastically reduced because of budget cuts and in some cases these programs have been eliminated.

"This unfunded federal mandate will force already overburdened local taxpayers to finance these essential upgrades for our local First Responders. More than 18,000 police departments, more than 26,000 fire departments, and millions of First Responders across the country are impacted by this mandate," said Congressman Rothman. "Without adequate funding, many of these local First Responders will be left with radio and communications equipment that will be unable to operate during an emergency. I am proud to stand with America's First Responders and Chairman Peter King in presenting this bipartisan solution. Our nation's heroes deserve nothing less."

"I am pleased to join Congressman Rothman in introducing The Help Emergency Responders Operate Emergency Systems, or HEROES Act of 2011, which will provide much needed assistance for our Nation's first responders as we approach the January 1, 2013 narrowbanding deadline. More importantly, this legislation reaffirms my commitment to reallocating the D Block to public safety for the development of a national interoperable public safety wireless broadband network," said Chairman King.

The HEROES Act will address the vulnerability of our emergency communication networks by setting up a DHS-administered grant program for local municipalities to apply for funding for essential communications equipment that the federal government requires them to upgrade.

The HEROES Act of 2011 will:

- Establish a \$400 million DHS-administered Narrowbanding Compliance Assistance Program to assist first responders in meeting the January 1, 2013 narrowband mandate
- Use the sale of federally owned spectrum to pay for the competitive grant program
- Reallocate the D block to public safety and provide funding for the construction of a national interoperable public safety wireless broadband network

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