




Lift Your Voice in Support of 9-1-1!

A Grassroots Advocacy Toolkit for NENA
State Chapter Leaders and Local Activists

Updated Spring 2025

NENA

THE 9-1-1 ASSOCIATION

   911nena911



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Dear NENA State and Local Leaders:

We hope this note finds you doing well.

This Advocacy Toolkit provides NENA resources that you and your colleagues can use to communicate with external audiences about 9-1-1 and the policy issues that affect us most.

We strongly urge you to take at least one or more of the actions in this Toolkit this year. Use the resources in this toolkit to communicate with your state, local and federal officials and encourage them to support NENA's policy priorities for better 9-1-1. For example, you can use the templates to send letters to lawmakers, invite lawmakers to visit your PSAP, or issue or request a proclamation in support of National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (NPSTW).

Please let us know if you have any questions or suggestions. NENA stands ready to help you advocate for your 9-1-1 agency.

Thank you for your continued dedication to the safety and well-being of our communities.

All the best,

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NENA'S 2025 POLICY PRIORITIES

NENA's government relations team advocates for you year-round, but your grassroots advocacy makes a crucial difference in our success!

Here is a little background on NENA's policy priorities and how you and your colleagues can make your voices heard.

NENA is advocating for [two essential, nonpartisan steps](#) to strengthen 9-1-1 in every community:

- 1. Congress should pass legislation to help fund 9-1-1 cybersecurity and tech upgrades.**

A bipartisan consensus was reached in the last Congress to use \$15 billion in FCC spectrum auction revenues to fully deploy Next Generation 9-1-1 nationwide, including essential cybersecurity and technology upgrades. This budget-neutral bill (H.R. 3565) passed the House Energy & Commerce Committee unanimously in May 2023. Members of NENA hope that the 119th Congress will finally complete action – and the President will sign – legislation to secure and modernize America's 9-1-1 infrastructure.

NG9-1-1 is faster, smarter, more reliable, and more effective in protecting the public. It also ensures cybersecurity protection of local public safety systems by incorporating advanced threat detection and intrusion prevention techniques. This is essential given 9-1-1's key role in homeland security, amid escalating attacks by nefarious actors, foreign and domestic.

Most current local 9-1-1 systems use a mix of outdated and new technologies that don't fully support the multimedia capabilities, broadband applications, and cybersecurity protections that NG9-1-1 can provide.

A nationwide upgrade to NG9-1-1 is necessary, but many states and localities don't have the financial resources to implement it rapidly. With federal funding assistance, NG9-1-1 will become the standard in all states and localities within about five years.

Congress needs to finish the job of passing this essential legislation.

NENA'S 2025 POLICY PRIORITIES

2. **Public Safety 9-1-1 Professionals Should be Classified as a Protective Service Occupation**

This zero-cost change would recognize the reality that 9-1-1 professionals do not serve in clerical positions but rather play an essential role in public safety and homeland security.

9-1-1 professionals undergo specialized training and have unique tools and responsibilities to assess emergency situations, initiate and coordinate emergency response protocols, and perform other life-saving functions prior to the arrival of field responders.

Numerous states and localities across the country have already reclassified 9-1-1 professionals, reflecting widespread agreement that 9-1-1 is protective service in nature, not clerical and administrative. Federal reclassification would provide a consistent category for 9-1-1 professionals in every state and territory.

The legislation needed to accomplish this change is the 9-1-1 SAVES Act (H.R. 637), offered by U.S. Representatives Norma Torres (D-CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA); and the Enhancing First Response Act, offered by Senators Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) in the Senate. Passage of this legislation would enable 9-1-1 professionals to have the same level of support and respect as other first responders with whom they work closely, including access to personal protective equipment and the ability to apply for public safety grants at the federal level.



WHAT YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES CAN DO TO SUPPORT THIS LEGISLATION

1. If you have not already done so, please follow the prompts on the [NENA Action Center](#) to send your Members of Congress a message on ways they can help address the challenges faced by 9-1-1 in your state and community.
2. Next, please encourage your 9-1-1 colleagues, family members, and friends to do the same!
3. You can also ask your Members of Congress to [join the NextGen 9-1-1 Caucus](#), the only bipartisan congressional organization dedicated exclusively to 9-1-1 emergency communications issues.

Here are a few additional documents and resources you can use:

- [Talking Points on the 9-1-1 Policy Agenda](#) – memorize these and use them when speaking to influential people
- A [resolution](#) calling on lawmakers to support 9-1-1 reclassification
- [Template](#) of letter to lawmakers calling for reclassification



CONTACT YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS, HOST A PSAP VISIT

We strongly urge you to be bold and introduce yourself to your federal, state, and local elected officials and their senior staff, whether in person, by email, or by phone. They need to know you as a local information resource on 9-1-1 issues. Feel free to copy from the letter templates found in this toolkit or ask NENA for help.

One great way to get acquainted and cultivate a helpful dialogue is to invite lawmakers to visit your PSAP. Your invitees could include Members of Congress and/or their staff members; state legislators; or local mayors and council members. Members of Congress often work in their district offices one or two days a week, especially during congressional recesses, which tend to occur around federal holidays and in August. Anytime from Q1 through April can be a good time because it's early in the year, and it falls during 9-1-1 Education Month, TC Week, and the Easter/Passover congressional break.

Use our [sample invitation](#) to get started, and use this [PSAP Visit Toolkit](#) from Know911 to prepare all the details of a successful visit.

Your Member of Congress may also have a hometown district office where you can visit them and their staff. You can find out when Congress is out of session and your member is likely to be in the home district by consulting these [Congressional calendars](#). (HINT: Congress is usually in recess for parts of January, April, August, September, November, and December.)

If resources allow, please plan on attending [9-1-1 Goes to Washington](#), which usually occurs in late February of each year. "GTW" is a great way to delve into the issues and visit your elected reps in Washington. If you *do* attend GTW, plan on following up with the people you met – and reach out to some new ones.

Meeting face-to-face with elected officials is extremely helpful in explaining the critical work you do!

HOW TO CULTIVATE YOUR LOCAL MEDIA

Most public safety agencies have a designated Public Information Officer (PIO) who oversees all communications with the public. If you or your PSAP supervisor have never done so, set up a meeting with your PIO to discuss your PSAP's concerns and how they might be addressed in public communications, such as mentioning workforce strains and technology/cybersecurity needs as part of their messaging and media outreach. Emphasize the need to raise the public's awareness and support of 9-1-1 to improve the protection of field responders and members of the public.

We strongly encourage you to plan at least one such activity this year, and NENA is here to help and amplify your efforts. Any time in Q1 and especially National 9-1-1 Education Month and TC Week in April are perhaps the best times to do this, but more accurate, attentive media coverage of 9-1-1 is always timely and relevant.

Some of the creative media outreach tactics that your PSAP might consider are the following.

- **Make News:** To gain more media attention, make news! Announce new features of 9-1-1 service; adopt policy advocacy resolutions; endorse legislation; appear at public events; and invite VIPs to your PSAPs.
- **PSAP Tours:** Invite local reporters to tour your PSAP and help educate the public about how to use 9-1-1 appropriately, as well as the challenges faced by 9-1-1.
- **Op-eds:** The term "op-ed" is an abbreviation of "opinion editorials," and most local newspapers have an opinions page that welcomes local op-ed submissions. Most op-eds are around 700 words and present a clear point of view, backed up with facts and anecdotes. NENA can provide you with templates on the various issues and can help edit your draft.
- **Cultivate relationships:** Contact the assignment editor and/or the public safety reporters of your local media outlets and develop relationships with them. Simply introducing yourself as an informational resource is a good place to start. As the old saying goes, "Don't wait until you're thirsty to dig the well," i.e., cultivate those relationships all year-round, so that you'll already have them when you really need them.



ASK STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS TO ISSUE A PROCLAMATION

April is National 9-1-1 Education Month, and the second full week of April is National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week (NPSTW), honoring the hard-working women and men of 9-1-1. Below is a sample proclamation that you or your NENA chapter can ask federal, state, and/or local officials to issue during this timeframe to applaud your teams' hard work and dedication. Be sure to ask at least one month in advance or sooner; and be persistent if you don't receive a commitment right away.

[Download a copy](#)

WHEREAS the 9-1-1 service is a lifeline that people depend on in emergencies; and

WHEREAS Public Safety Telecommunicators are the first points of contact with those who use the 9-1-1 emergency number; and

WHEREAS, when an emergency occurs, the prompt response of field responders including police officers, firefighters, paramedics and mental health crisis counselors is critical to the protection of life and preservation of property; and

WHEREAS Public Safety Telecommunicators are responsible for engaging with callers, who are often under duress or in danger, to gather necessary information, determine the severity of the emergency, dispatch field response personnel, and coordinate the response to the ongoing incident; and

WHEREAS Public Safety Telecommunicators are therefore critical to the safety of field responders and to the protection of life and preservation of property; and

WHEREAS Public Safety Telecommunicators, technology specialists, and support staff are highly trained in their duties and demonstrate the utmost concern for the well-being of all citizens and for the safety of field responders; and

WHEREAS each Public Safety Telecommunicator has exhibited compassion, understanding, and professionalism during the performance of their job in the past year;

NOW THEREFORE be it resolved that the [FILL IN YOUR BODY OF GOVERNMENT] declares [DATES FOR THIS YEAR] shall be recognized as "National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week" in [FILL IN THE JURISDICTION].

END

NENA'S "THANK YOU 9-1-1" CAMPAIGN

NENA's "Thank You 9-1-1" Campaign is a "human interest" initiative to help raise awareness and appreciation of the hard work done for all of us by America's 9-1-1 professionals.

Every local 9-1-1 authority faces perennial challenges such as chronic underfunding; lack of recognition; workforce recruitment and retention; technology transitions; and health and wellness issues. The #ThankYou911 campaign is designed to address these problems by building public gratitude for the work of 9-1-1 professionals on a personal, emotional level.

Through the #ThankYou911 campaign, NENA has fostered activities such as:

- 9-1-1 Appreciation Days at professional sports games, which included on-field recognition of local 9-1-1 heroes and free tickets to 9-1-1 professionals.
- Partnerships with convenience stores and restaurant chains, providing free snacks and beverages for 9-1-1 professionals during National 9-1-1 Education Month or on 24/7 Day in July.
- Social media shout-outs by government officials, TV stars, and professional athletes.
- #ThankYou911 advertising on radio stations, local billboards, and movie theater screens.



Rep. Norma Torres @NormaJTorres · Apr 13
It's National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week! As a former 911 dispatcher, I know the sacrifices of these brave men and women who connect those in need with life-saving services. This week, be sure to show your gratitude for their unwavering service. #ThankYou911



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NENA'S "THANK YOU 9-1-1" CAMPAIGN

We would love to help bring about #ThankYou911 activities in more communities across the USA. Read more about the campaign and the successful strategies NENA has employed in our [#ThankYou911 Grassroots Toolkit](#), and figure out ways to emulate them in your community.

You can also refer to our [sample #ThankYou911 statement](#), which can be adapted for use by various speakers or in published articles.

Please let us know if you do conduct any #ThankYou911 activities, as we would love to recognize and amplify them through our NENA communications channels!

We're Here to Serve You!

Please let us know if you have any questions or needs that we can help support!

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