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

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

I hope this note finds you 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 urge you to take action by using 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 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 supporting using FCC spectrum auction revenue to fund Next Generation 9-1-1 deployment.

U.S. Representatives Cathy Rogers (R-WA) and Frank Pallone (D-NJ) – the chair and ranking members of the powerful House Commerce Committee – are the sponsors of H.R. 3565, which includes the Next Generation 91-1 Act. This act closely mirrors legislation that was introduced and nearly agreed to at the end of the 2021-2022 session of Congress. This bipartisan bill sets aside up to $15 billion in FCC spectrum auction revenues to help states and localities accelerate the Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) transition. The House Energy and Commerce Committee voted to approve this bill unanimously in May 2023. The Senate has not yet advanced legislation due to disputes over which bands of spectrum should be auctioned. Thus, NENA supports the broader framework of H.R. 3565 – to use FCC spectrum auction revenues to fund NG9-1-1 deployment.

NG9-1-1 is faster, smarter, more reliable, and more effective in protecting the public. Most current systems use outdated technology that doesn’t support the multimedia capabilities, broadband applications, and system resiliency that NG9-1-1 can provide.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 for rapid implementation. With the funding to be provided by this bill, NG9-1-1 will become the standard in all states and localities. Without it, America will continue to have NG9-1-1 “haves” and “have-nots.”

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

2. **Pass the 9-1-1 SAVES Act and reclassify 9-1-1 as a public safety 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 the public safety chain.

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

Passage of the 9-1-1 SAVES Act would enable 9-1-1 professionals to have the same level of support and respect as field responders, including access to personal protective equipment and the ability to apply for public safety grants at the federal level.

The 9-1-1 SAVES Act (H.R. 6319) was introduced in the U.S. House by Representatives Norma Torres (D-CA) and Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA). Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN) introduced the companion bill (S. 3556) in the Senate.
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.

Next, please encourage your 9-1-1 colleagues, family members, and friends to do the same!

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
- A **Template** of letter to lawmakers calling for reclassification
We strongly urge you to be bold and introduce yourself to your Members of Congress and their senior staff, whether in person, by email, or by phone. They need to know you as a local information resource. 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 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. April is a good time because 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.

You can find out when Congress is out of session and your member is in the home district by using this [Congressional calendar](#). (HINT: Congress is usually in recess for parts of January, April, August, September, November, and December.)

Also, if resources allow, please plan on attending [9-1-1 Goes to Washington](#), which usually occurs in late February of each year – and plan on meeting your elected reps in Washington.

**Meeting face-to-face with elected officials is extremely helpful in explaining the critical work you do!**
Most public safety agencies have a designated Public Information Officer (PIO) who oversees all communications with the public. If your PSAP supervisor has never done so, encourage them to ask for a meeting with your PIO to discuss your PSAP’s concerns and how they can include issues such as workforce and Next Generation 9-1-1 in their regular 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. National 9-1-1 Education Month and TC Week in April are perfect times to roll this out.

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

- **PSAP Tours:** Invite local media members 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 submissions. Most op-eds are around 700 words and present a clear point of view, backed up with facts and anecdotes. NENA can provide templates on various issues and can help edit your draft.

- **Make News:** To gain more media attention, make news! Announce new features of 9-1-1 service; adopt policy resolutions; endorse legislation; appear at public events; and invite VIPs to your PSAPs.

- **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, “Dig the well before you need the water,” i.e., cultivate those relationships all year-round, so that you’ll already have them when you really need them.
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.

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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: April 14 to 19, 2024] shall be recognized as “National Public Safety Telecommunicator Week” in [FILL IN THE JURISDICTION].

END
NENA’s “Thank You 9-11” 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.
NENA’s “Thank You 9-11” 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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