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**SUBJECT: Support for Reauthorization of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet)**

We understand the House E&C Communications Subcommittee has an upcoming hearing on FirstNet. We rely on the FirstNet network and support FirstNet Authority Reauthorization. We encourage Representative Erin Houchin to support the FirstNet program's continued success.

As a largely rural county, Ripley County faces unique public safety communications challenges, including limited commercial coverage, geographic isolation, and the need to coordinate multi-agency responses across jurisdictional boundaries. FirstNet has proven to be a vital and reliable communications platform that directly enhances officer safety, operational effectiveness, and our ability to protect the public—particularly during emergencies, large-scale incidents, and natural disasters when commercial networks are often congested or unreliable.

FirstNet's priority and preemption capabilities ensure that law enforcement, fire, EMS, and emergency management personnel can maintain uninterrupted communications during critical incidents. This interoperability is essential for coordinated multi-agency response efforts, especially in rural environments where resources are limited and response times can be impacted by distance and terrain.

In 2023, the Ripley County Sheriff's Office relied on FirstNet technology during a search and rescue operation to transmit critical data to analysts located off site. Using FirstNet communications equipment, we were able to securely and reliably send digital imagery for analysis. Without the FirstNet communications equipment and network reliability, we would have been unable to utilize this critical resource, significantly impacting the effectiveness of the mission.

This real-world application underscores the importance of a dedicated, public-safety-focused broadband network. FirstNet is not simply a convenience—it is an operational necessity that enables advanced technologies, improves situational awareness, and strengthens outcomes during life-safety incidents.

Reauthorizing the FirstNet Authority will ensure continued investment, innovation, and long-term stability in a communications system purpose-built for first responders. We respectfully urge your support for this reauthorization and appreciate your continued commitment to strengthening public safety communications for communities across Indiana and the nation.

  
LEE H. DAVIDSON, Chief Deputy  
Ripley County Sheriff's Office

2/2/26