

THURSDAY, MAY 19, 2011

# LIEBERMAN, MCCAIN INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO DEDICATE BANDWIDTH TO FIRST RESPONDERS

WASHINGTON – Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Chairman Joe Lieberman, ID-Conn., and Committee Member John McCain, R-Ariz., Thursday moved to fulfill a remaining 9/11 Commission recommendation by introducing legislation to dedicate bandwidth on the broadband spectrum for first responders.

The two Senators said the [Broadband for First Responders Act of 2011](http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=b81f9fe6-fbc3-4b4f-a648-9d7a8ac15523) ([http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore\\_id=b81f9fe6-fbc3-4b4f-a648-9d7a8ac15523](http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=b81f9fe6-fbc3-4b4f-a648-9d7a8ac15523)) would set aside the so-called “D Block” part of the spectrum specifically for public safety agencies to build a secure coast-to-coast communications network to use in emergencies.

“As it stands now, the mobile device the average teenager carries has more capability than those of the men and women who put their lives on the line for us each and every day – and that’s just wrong,” **Lieberman** said. “Public safety communicates on slices of scattered spectrum that prevent interoperable communications among agencies and jurisdictions, and that do not allow the large data transmissions that we take for granted in today’s commercial communications.

“Securing the D Block for public safety will allow us to build a nationwide interoperable network for emergency communications that could prevent the kinds of communication meltdowns we had during 9-11 and Hurricane Katrina.”

**McCain said:** “We have slightly more than one hundred days until the ten year anniversary of the horrific events of 9/11. I hope over the next one hundred days the Senate Majority Leader will consider bringing this bill to the floor for full consideration and that at that time my colleagues will join me and Senator Lieberman in providing public safety with the interoperable communications network they deserve,” said Senator John McCain. “It is the least we can do for those who put their lives in danger each and every day to protect all of us.”

The Broadband for First Responders Act of 2011 would provide up to \$5.5 billion to assist with the costs of constructing the network and up to \$5.5 billion for long-term maintenance. This money would come from revenues generated by the auction of different bands of spectrum to commercial carriers. Any auction revenues in excess of \$11 billion would go to deficit reduction.

The Senators said they opposed the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposal to auction the D Block to commercial interests with the hope that public safety will be able to piggy-back on it. In a crisis, first responders need secure, reliable, and quick communications that will not be disrupted by commercial traffic, the Senators said.

Setting aside the D Block would allow first responders to send video, maps, and other large data transmissions over their mobile devices, and would ensure that police, fire, and other emergency response providers can communicate with each other. The deaths of hundreds of firefighters who entered the World Trade Center towers on 9/11 might have been prevented if they had had this capability, and that’s why the 9/11 Commission made its recommendation for dedicated public safety bandwidth.

Over 40 public safety and state and local government organizations support the legislation.

For a summary of the bill click [here \(http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore\\_id=6fe957fc-dc83-47d5-8310-a65a3e87dc0a\)](http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=6fe957fc-dc83-47d5-8310-a65a3e87dc0a). For text of the bill click [here \(http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore\\_id=b81f9fe6-fbc3-4b4f-a648-9d7a8ac15523\)](http://www.hsgac.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Files.View&FileStore_id=b81f9fe6-fbc3-4b4f-a648-9d7a8ac15523).

