



National Association of State EMS Officials
201 Park Washington Court Falls Church, VA 22046-4527 www.nasemso.org
703-538-1799 fax 703-241-5603 info@nasemso.org

To the Editor:

January 15, 2008

Your recent editorial (January 14, 2008, "Martin's Frontline Folly," p. A12) on the 700 MHz auction omits numerous facts. Contrary to the impression left by your headline, while the FCC and Chairman Kevin Martin deserve credit for advancing the concept of a public-private partnership, literally hundreds of public safety organizations and major players in the wireless industry and the homeland security sectors throughout the country originally voiced support for this idea. We are now many years past the disasters of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina and it remains painfully clear that without regulatory intervention, the marketplace, left to its own devices, will not solve our national public safety communications crisis. We need an innovative approach.

The only way we can permanently solve this problem is by correctly aligning the interests of public safety with the commercial sector. You accurately point out that only 10 MHz of spectrum going to auction, out of a total of 62 MHz, would be dedicated to the public-private partnership. However, your readers should also note that even this 10 MHz of spectrum will be primarily available for commercial use -- only in times of crisis will it be prioritized for public safety. Moreover, these airwaves will be combined with an additional 10 MHz of public safety spectrum not going to auction, giving a commercial entity access to more spectrum. Remarkably, under the public-private partnership, the commercial sector gains in spectrum efficiency and utilization even as the public gains the advantage of private capital for a nationwide public safety network.

Yes, it appears that one potential bidder may not be participating. However, we remind you that there are 214 other bidders poised to compete in the 700 MHz auction. Let's wait to see how ultimately the commercial sector reacts to this opportunity.

Fergus Laughridge
President
National Association of State Emergency Medical Services Officials
Falls Church, Virginia