

Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank Announces Board of Directors for the First Responder Network Authority

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FirstNet to Create Nationwide Broadband Network to Improve Public Safety

In [remarks today](#) at the Opening General Session of the 78th Annual Conference & Expo hosted by the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International, Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank [appointed twelve of the nation's leading experts on public safety and wireless broadband communications](#) to serve on the Board of the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet). FirstNet is congressionally mandated to establish a nationwide wireless broadband network that enables police, firefighters, emergency services personnel, and others in public safety to better communicate with one another during emergencies and use new technology to improve response time, keep communities safe, and save lives.

The Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, signed into law in February 2012, created FirstNet, an independent authority within Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Congress directed that FirstNet be run by a 15-person Board of Directors, with the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Attorney General, and the Director of the Office of Management and Budget named as permanent members of the Board. Congress charged the Secretary of Commerce with selecting the remaining 12 members.

“Today's announcement is an example of the Obama administration's commitment to ensuring that our brave first responders have the modern communications capabilities they need to be safe while protecting our communities,” said Acting U.S. Commerce Secretary Rebecca Blank. “For too long, America's first responders have been hampered by outdated technology and incompatible networks, and the creation of the FirstNet Board is a critical first step toward changing that. The Board members, along with their permanent federal partners, possess a diverse combination of expertise necessary to successfully carry out this important mission. Americans can't wait any longer for effective emergency services that use available cutting-edge technology—it is part of what we need to support a 21st century economy that is built to last.”

The FirstNet Board of Directors represents the interests of a wide range of stakeholders, including public safety; states, territories, tribes and localities; and urban and rural residents. Each member of this diverse group brings considerable public safety, network, technology, and/or finance expertise. They are:

- Tim Bryan, CEO, National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative
- Charles “Chuck” Dowd, Deputy Chief, New York City Police Department
- F. Craig Farrill, Wireless telecommunications executive
- Paul Fitzgerald, Sheriff, Story County, Iowa
- Samuel “Sam” Ginn, Telecommunications executive
- Jeffrey Johnson, Fire Chief (retired); former Chair, State Interoperability Council, State of Oregon; CEO, Western Fire Chiefs Association
- William Keever, Telecommunications executive (retired)
- Kevin McGinnis, Chief/CEO, North East Mobile Health Services

- Ed Reynolds, Telecommunications executive (retired)
- Susan Swenson, Telecommunications/technology executive
- Teri Takai, Government information technology expert; former CIO, states of Michigan and California
- Wellington Webb, Founder, Webb Group International; former Mayor, Denver, Colorado

Acting Secretary Blank appointed Samuel “Sam” Ginn as the Chairman of the FirstNet Board. Mr. Ginn, a pioneer and leader in the wireless telecommunications industry, brings more than four decades of senior operations and management experience. He served as chairman and CEO of Pacific Telesis from 1988-1994 and chairman of AirTouch from 1993-1999. In 1999, when Vodafone acquired AirTouch, Mr. Ginn assumed the position of chairman in the United Kingdom.

“The Board has a wealth of public safety expertise and members who thoroughly understand state and local communications needs. And with Sam Ginn in the lead, we have an exceptional roster of wireless industry veterans who know how to build a network and develop a product that offers the applications desired by the public safety community at an affordable price,” said Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information and NTIA Administrator Lawrence E. Strickling. “We are grateful that they have agreed to take on this challenge, and we are confident that they will meet it.”

FirstNet will develop and operate the new broadband network, which is to be based on a single, nationwide network architecture, thus enabling first responders and public safety officials to communicate with one another within and across jurisdictions. The secure and interoperable network will also support cutting-edge applications – for example, enabling firefighters to download blueprints of burning buildings in order to plan their entry route, allowing emergency medical technicians to remotely access a victim’s medical records from an ambulance, or helping police to identify criminal suspects through facial recognition or iris scanning technologies.

Congress allocated \$7 billion of spectrum auction proceeds and valuable spectrum bandwidth towards deployment of the nationwide network. Congress also provided \$135 million for a new State and Local Implementation Grant Program administered by NTIA to support State, regional, tribal, and local jurisdictions’ planning work with FirstNet to ensure the network meets their wireless public safety communications needs. FirstNet will also seek to leverage existing commercial and government infrastructure for the new network.

Additional Information:

Fact sheet with additional [Fact Sheet: First Responder Network Authority \(FirstNet\)](#)

Fact sheet on the inaugural [FirstNet Board announcement](#)

FirstNet Board [Member Statements](#)

Information on NTIA’s public safety efforts: <http://ntia.doc.gov/category/public-safety>