AWARN
Advanced Warning and Response Network

June 4, 2015

The Honorable Ron Johnson, Chair
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
U. S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson:

We are writing in support of your efforts to update and reform the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS). Among other elements, we specifically endorse the requirements in your pending legislation (S. 1180) that IPAWS be designed to adapt to and integrate future technologies for communicating directly with the public.

A near-term technology that can help achieve some of the key goals of S. 1180 is the Advanced Warning and Response Network (AWARN), a dual-use, broadcast-based system announced earlier this year. AWARN is a next-generation alerting system developed by a coalition of interests that includes LG Electronics and its U.S. R&D subsidiary Zenith; GatesAir; Digital Alert Systems, a division of Monroe Electronics, Inc.; the National Association of Broadcasters; Public Broadcasting Service; Capitol Broadcasting Company/WRAL; Triveni Digital; Wearable Xlabs; and Convergence Services.

Consistent with the goals of your legislation, AWARN will be capable of providing emergency alerts that are much broader and more informative than 90-character mobile text messages, the Wireless Emergency Alert System (WEA), or the legacy Emergency Alert System. Utilizing the existing backbone of the nation's television broadcasting infrastructure, AWARN will deliver rich media content – such as live video alerts, video files, photos, weather radar, evacuation maps, multiple translations, and accessible media – to an unlimited number of enabled mobile phones, television sets, tablets or other devices without overloading the cellular network, or be subject to broadband outages during emergencies.

As more local agencies use IPAWS and WEA, the challenge posed by current technology limitations will only become more acute. AWARN allows emergency messages to point people to places where they can get more information, something neither WEA nor EAS currently does well.

AWARN is based on the same open standards as IPAWS, such as the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP), and is designed for seamless incorporation into IPAWS. It is a congestion-free and standards-based approach that utilizes terrestrial broadcasting rather than cellular network connectivity, which will yield high reliability and mass, instantaneous distribution even when cellular and broadband networks fail and the electric grid is down (for devices equipped with a battery supply). AWARN cost-effectively addresses the need for a new approach to emergency communications that you have commendably identified.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you and/or your staff to provide more information about our efforts and the many benefits that next-generation alerting systems can provide. Please contact Kevin Curtin at (202) 638-1260 or kevincurtin@verizon.net to let us know how we can assist you with your legislation and provide additional data about the important new ways of providing emergency alerts and notices so as to ensure the safety of the American public.

Sincerely,

Capitol Broadcasting Co. / WRAL
Convergence Services, Inc.
LG Electronics USA
Monroe Electronics, Inc./Digital Alert Systems
National Association of Broadcasters
Public Broadcasting Service
Triveni Digital
Wearable XLabs
Zenith Electronics LLC