

**FOR IMMEDIATE DISTRIBUTION**  
**March 2, 2007**

**SGA Task Force:**  
**Achieving Interoperability for Public Safety Communications**

**Background:** On Sunday, February 25, 2007, members of the Southern Governors' Association (SGA) met to discuss the need for public safety communications interoperability. During that discussion, it was agreed that an Interoperability Task Force (Task Force) should be established to determine what position the organization should take with regard to proposals to achieve interoperability, including making additional spectrum available for public safety usage and deploying a nationwide interoperable communications network pursuant to a public-private partnership model or using existing tools and technologies to maximize public safety spectrum.

This document will outline the process being established for interested parties—including but not limited to representatives from the public safety and telecommunications communities—to share their expertise on this subject in support of the Task Force's work, which, at the direction of SGA Chairman Haley Barbour, must be completed within 60 days.

Due to the short time frame, SGA is requesting that all interested parties submit their recommendations for how to best achieve public safety communications interoperability within the specified time periods and parameters outlined in this document. The Task Force will review all accepted materials and submit a report to Task Force governors, which will be the basis for a decision to be made by the organization as a whole no later than April 16, 2007.

**Framework of Discussion:** The public safety community—including local and state police agencies, sheriffs' offices, fire departments, emergency medical services and other emergency response services for highways, public works and utilities—has unanimously agreed that the following functionality is required for them to meet the public's expectations:

1. Broadband data services (such as text messaging, photos, diagrams, and streaming video) not currently available in existing public safety land mobile systems.
2. A robust and redundant public safety network with infrastructure built to withstand local natural disasters (tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, floods, etc) that would include strengthened towers and back up power with fuel supplies to withstand long term outages of public power sources.
3. Nationwide roaming and interoperability for local, state, and federal public safety agencies (police, fire and EMS) and other emergency services such as transportation, health care, and utilities.
4. Access to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN), similar to current commercial cellular services.
5. Push-to-talk, one-to-one and one-to-many radio capability that would provide a back-up to

- (but not replace) traditional public safety land mobile mission critical voice systems.
6. Access to satellite services to provide reliable nationwide communications where terrestrial services either do not exist or are temporarily out of service.

Governors have had information presented to them that suggests such functionality could be achieved in one of at least two ways:

1. The implementation of a nationwide public safety broadband network, created through a public/private partnership, controlled by the public safety community, which holds a nationwide license for 30 MHz of spectrum in the upper 700 MHz band and is authorized to deploy this network pursuant to a public-private sector partnership model; or
2. Harnessing the power of markets, computers, software, high-speed digital networks and advances in radio technology, as well as using the legislative tools provided by Congress and the Administration to achieve the kind of interoperability required by the public safety sector.

The Task Force's mission is to understand the precise details of how these, and possibly other approaches, would achieve the stated needs of the public safety community, as well as the pros and cons of these approaches. This understanding will allow SGA's member governors to make an informed decision about how they will participate in the ongoing discussion about these issues with federal policymakers.

**Process:** SGA Chairman Mississippi Governor Haley Barbour will lead a task force of at least five other SGA member governors; the roster of the full task force will be published on SGA's Web site as soon as it is finalized. These governors will be supported by their appointed SGA Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) member and/or other appointed staff member, and all meetings and discussions held by the Task Force will be open to any other SGA member governor and/or SAC representative. These meetings and discussions will be closed to the public.

The following process will be followed:

1. *Notification of Intent to Participate.* All parties interested in this issue and wishing to have their perspectives considered by the Task Force must notify the SGA of their intent to participate in the Task Force process outlined below by submitting an email, with complete contact information (name, title, company, address, phone number, fax number, e-mail), to [sga@sso.org](mailto:sga@sso.org) by **Friday, March 9, 2007**.
2. *Submission of Recommendations:* Parties must submit written recommendations addressing the series of questions, outlined below, in electronic format, **no later than 5:00 pm (Eastern) Friday, March 16, 2007**. All responses to the initial questions must meet all specifications detailed within this document in order to be accepted for consideration.
  - a. *Accepted responses.* Accepted responses will be posted on SGA's Web site by close of business Monday, March 19, 2007 (exceptions discussed below). Copies of all accepted responses will be circulated to all SGA Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) members and other governors' staff appointed to this Task Force. A meeting of governors' staff supporting the Task Force for an initial discussion of the written

submissions will be held on Thursday, March 22, at a time to be determined, and will be open to other SAC representatives with an interest in the issue; the meeting will be closed to the public.

- b. *Rejected responses.* Any response received after the stated deadline or not complying with the documentation parameters outlined within this document may be rejected for consideration. If a response is rejected, the party submitting that response will be notified.
  - c. *Questions.* Any questions raised by the SAC regarding any of the recommendations will be sent immediately to the individual/organization who submitted them for an electronic, written response within three (3) business days.
3. *Rebuttals.* If participating parties wish to submit a rebuttal to any of these proposals may do so in writing, submitted in electronic format, **no later than 5:00 pm (Eastern) Monday, March 26, 2007**. Participating parties are *not required* to submit rebuttals. All proposals submitted to the Task Force can be accessed for review at SGA's Web site, [www.southerngovernors.org](http://www.southerngovernors.org).
- a. *Accepted Rebuttals.* Rebuttals will only be accepted from those individuals or organizations that submitted initial comments that were accepted by SGA. All responses must meet the specifications detailed below and will be posted on SGA's Web site by close of business Tuesday, March 27, 2007. Again, copies of all responses will be circulated to all SGA SAC members. A meeting of Task Force SAC members for a discussion of the status of submissions will be held on Thursday, March 29, 2007, at a time to be determined, and will be open to other SAC representatives with an interest in the issue; the meeting will be closed to the public.
  - b. *Rejected Rebuttals.* Any response received after the stated deadline of March 26 or not complying with the documentation parameters outlined within this document may be rejected for consideration. Furthermore, rebuttals will only be accepted from parties participating in the recommendation process. If a response is rejected, the party submitting that response will be notified.
  - c. *Questions.* Any questions raised by the SAC regarding any of the rebuttals will be sent immediately to the submitting individual/organization with a request for an electronic, written response within three (3) business days.

**Task Force Action:** Pursuant to the outcome of both the March 22 and March 29 meeting, SGA will determine whether additional SAC meetings are required, produce a summary briefing paper that succinctly outlines the options that have been submitted, and if possible, include consensus recommendations produced by the SAC. This briefing paper will be disseminated to governors through their SAC and/or other appointed representatives no later than Monday, April 9. A conference call will be scheduled for governors to discuss the options, and if available, any recommendations that have been submitted, no later than Monday, April 16, 2007.

As noted above, all SAC meetings and any conference calls with SAC representatives and/or governors will be closed to the public. A statement of the SGA consensus position will be released at the conclusion of the process.

**Documentation Requested and Required Format:** SGA is requesting interested parties to submit recommendations outlining the approach that they believe governors should support in achieving the public safety community's functionality requirements.

These recommendations should provide explicit details of:

- What needs to be done to achieve national interoperability and how it can be achieved, including a discussion of how much spectrum would be required and any investments needed in software, hardware, equipment, etc.;
- The estimated costs associated with all aspects of the approach being advocated;
- Who should be/is responsible for paying those costs;
- The technical feasibility of this approach;
- The time required to successfully get the necessary federal approval(s) and/or funds, if any;
- A clear definition of the role of states (i.e. funding, operation, etc.);
- The expected time frame during which interoperability would be achieved; and
- Anything else needed to understand how the recommended actions would achieve the goal of interoperability.

Furthermore, interested parties should specifically identify what aspects of the functionality required by the public safety community as outlined within this document would and would not be addressed if their recommendations were adopted. If there is any other information the Task Force needs to fully understand the validity of your recommendations to achieving the goal of interoperability, please include it.

Any recommendations submitted for the March 16<sup>th</sup> deadline should be limited only to the interested party's vision for how interoperability can/should be achieved. Comments outlining opposition to other proposals that are submitted during the initial recommendations phase of this process will be rejected. Parties who have their submissions rejected will be notified, but they will not have an opportunity to resubmit.

Documentation submitted for each phase identified above must be:

- Limited to no more than five (5) pages of text, single-spaced, using 12-pt font with 1-inch margins;
- Any discussion about technical feasibility must be provided in a separate document not to exceed five (5) additional pages and may be subject to review by technical experts retained by SGA;
- Limited to no more than ten (10) additional pages of supporting charts or graphs; and
- Provided electronically in either Microsoft Word or PDF format to [sga@sso.org](mailto:sga@sso.org) no later than 5:00 pm (Eastern) on the designated due date.

SGA reserves the right to accept or reject any proposals that do not meet the deadlines, space limitations or other stipulations outlined herein.

SGA recognizes that information provided in the technical feasibility portion of responses may be considered proprietary information. Upon request when submitting your response, SGA will exclude this information from being posted on SGA's Web site.

Any questions about the Task Force process or this document should be directed to Diane Duff, Executive Director, Southern Governors' Association, 202-624-5897, [sga@sso.org](mailto:sga@sso.org).