

**“State Wide Interoperable Communications Enhancement Act” or
the “SWIC Enhancement Act”
introduced by Rep. Payne, Jr. (D-NJ)**

The September 11, 2001 attacks and Hurricane Katrina underscored a significant vulnerability undermining the ability for first responders to coordinate activities that save lives – the lack of interoperable emergency communications capabilities. Congress created the Office of Emergency Communications (OEC) within the Department of Homeland Security to lead and coordinate national interoperability efforts and appropriated over \$13 billion – largely through State and local grant programs – to help State and local first responders achieve interoperability. OEC published the first National Emergency Communications Plan in 2008, and identified as a National Milestone the appointment of full-time, dedicated a Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (SWIC) in each State and territory to coordinate interoperability activities across all levels of government. SWICs have played an instrumental role in advancing interoperability capabilities in a cost-effective manner.

Unfortunately, due to the elimination of the Interoperable Emergency Communications Grant Program and reduced funding for other State and local homeland security grant programs, some States are eliminating SWICs. As a result, activities critical to maintaining and advancing interoperable emergency communications policies are not being effectively coordinated and opportunities to eliminate duplication and unnecessary redundancies could be missed. Congress must ensure that the progress achieved through over a decade’s worth of investment in interoperability is not mothballed because SWICs have been eliminated. The SWIC Enhancement Act would protect the progress made toward achieving interoperability by requiring States, Territories, and Tribes receiving State Homeland Security Grant funding to have a SWIC or to have delegated activities related to advancing interoperability to other individuals.

Certification that a Statewide Interoperability Coordinator is Appointed:

- Requires any State applying for State Homeland Security Grant Program funding to certify that the Governor has appointed a Statewide Interoperability Coordinator (“SWIC”) and to identify that individual.
- Requires any State applying for State Homeland Security Grant Program Funding in which the Governor *has not appointed a SWIC* to certify that certain activities related to achieving and maintaining interoperability are being carried out in some other manner and to identify an individual who is serving as the point of contact of such functions.
- The activities carried out by the SWIC or by the State in some other manner include:
 - Overseeing day-to-day efforts to achieve and maintain Statewide interoperability;
 - Coordinating State interoperability and emergency communications projects;
 - Updating the Statewide Interoperability Communications Plan, as necessary; and
 - Establishing and maintaining working groups to help develop and implement interoperable communications policies