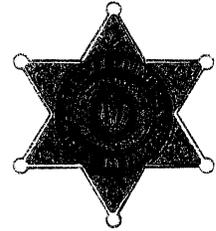




FRANK G. COUSINS, JR.
SHERIFF

*Essex County Correctional Facility
&
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March 5, 2004

Secretary Marlene H. Dortch
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

WT Docket 02-55: Improving Public Safety Communications in the 800 MHz Band

Dear Secretary Dortch:

As the Essex County Sheriff, I lead a staff of 554 full-time employees who serve more than 723,000 residents every day. Our department is fully committed to protecting the communities of Essex County. Our department is not alone in our unwavering commitment to public service, and it is therefore very concerning to learn that interference is affecting our public safety colleagues' ability to serve their communities.

Interference to public safety radios is becoming more pervasive every day. This is a critical problem for Massachusetts, where interference has been reported in nine out of ten Congressional districts. But, our state is not alone – there have been approximately 1,000 reported occurrences nationwide in more than half of the states in the Union.

This is an issue in need of an immediate resolution. When there is a communications breakdown for first responders, routine operations can quickly turn into life-threatening emergencies. Thankfully, lives have not been lost because of interference, but it remains a needless threat.

As the chief law enforcement officer for the County of Essex, I join with my public safety colleagues in support the Consensus Plan. It is the only solution presented to the FCC that will proactively eliminate interference so that public safety officials will not have to deal with such a dangerous impediment anymore. The Consensus Plan also provides additional spectrum for our future communications needs. And it is privately funded – requiring no financial input from government, local public safety agencies, or taxpayers. Simply put, this Plan solves the problem and meets our needs.

I ask the Commission for your help in solving this problem. Fire, police and EMS officials have all come together in support of the Consensus Plan and we now look to you to implement this comprehensive solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F.G. Cousins, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Sheriff Frank G. Cousins, Jr.
Essex County Sheriff's Department

CC: Senator Edward Kennedy
Senator John Kerry
Representative John Tierney