

### An Historical Year For America And FirstNet

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There could be two significant historical events this November. On November 8, 2016 the American people will elect the 45th President of the United States. One week earlier, on November 1, the First Responder Network Authority, commonly referred to as FirstNet, hopes to select a winning bidder to construct, maintain and operate a nationwide public safety broadband network (“NPSBN”).

**Purpose:** The NPSBN is intended to bring our nation’s public safety personnel into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, giving them access to state-of-the-art broadband capabilities including high speed data and video on a hardened network designed to operate under emergency conditions. FirstNet is licensed for 20 MHz of 700 MHz “beachfront” spectrum. A successful launch of the network will enable a highly informed, coordinated response to public safety events including medical emergencies, natural disasters and acts of terrorism.

**The FirstNet RFP.** Almost four years after Congress established FirstNet through enactment of the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, FirstNet recently released its long-awaited [Request for Proposal](#) (RFP) looking for a commercial entity to build and run the network. Although only one nationwide bid will be selected, no one entity is capable of meeting all of FirstNet’s objectives. To achieve a truly nationwide network, prime bidders will need to form partnerships, including those with rural telecommunications service providers and other rural America infrastructure owners, such as electric cooperatives and oil and gas companies. The selection process will be conducted over four phases with only the most competitive bids surviving to the final phase.

**Focus on Capability Statements.** In the first phase, interested parties must demonstrate they are capable of performing necessary work by providing a Capability Statement. These statements are due by March 17, 2016.

Capability Statements will be evaluated based on five factors:

- 1.

the ability to obtain public safety use and adoption of the network;

2.

the ability to provide coverage and capacity nationwide using the NPSBN and other spectrum;

3.

partnerships with rural telecommunications providers;

4.

the ability to monetize the network, which may include a secondary user customer base in addition to primary public safety users; and

5.

the financial ability to develop and sustain the network.

Once this threshold level is met FirstNet's review of the competitors will intensify.

**Submission Date for Qualified Bidders.** Following FirstNet's analysis of the Capability Statements, those deemed best qualified will then be invited to submit a proposal. Proposals in response to the RFP are due April 29, 2016. A proposal must address numerous objectives, including nationwide coverage, financial stability, competitive pricing, cybersecurity solutions and construction milestones for both urban and rural areas. The winning bid will be based on the proposal delivering the "overall best value" to FirstNet based on these objectives and certain defined technical requirements.

If all goes according to plan, November 2016 could be a very historical month.

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