



# APCO International

*Association Of Public-Safety Communications Officials-International, Inc.*

## **Extending the PSIC Grant Program Position Statement**

APCO International strongly supports the bill sponsored by Rep. Anh Cao (R – La.) to amend the Digital Television Transition and Public Safety Act of 2005 to extend the interoperable emergency communications grant program through fiscal year 2012 (H.R. 1819).

APCO International is concerned about the finding of the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General (OIG) that states, “the PSIC grantees appear unlikely to finish projects within the short funding time frame.”<sup>1</sup> In the report, the OIG concluded that “most grantees have made little progress in actually implementing their projects, and may not be able to meet the September 30, 2010, statutory deadline for completing.” APCO International fully supports the OIG recommendation that “NTIA promptly provide technical assistance to grantees to accelerate the process, carefully monitor their progress, keep Congress informed of the PSIC program's status, and if necessary seek to extend the deadline for expending grant proceeds.”

APCO International believes that the grantees will not have the full benefit of the three-year grant award period for acquiring and deploying interoperable communications equipment to improve their statewide networks because the Department of Homeland Security approved all state communications interoperability plans in March and April 2008; and NTIA approved all but five states’ investment justifications and individual investments as of September 30, 2008.

The OIG report states that, “[a]s of September 30, 2008, less than 1.5 percent, \$11.3 million of the \$968 million in PSIC grant funds, had been drawn down. One state, Louisiana, drew down \$6.3 million, which accounted for more than half the amount drawn down. As of February 28, 2009—17 months into the 36-month grant period—less than 7.0 percent or \$66.3 million in PSIC grant funds had been drawn down.”

Grantees need the additional time to comply with “state and local legal and procurement requirements, which in some cases added months to the purchasing process.”<sup>2</sup> There is also a significant delay for projects that are expanding interoperable communications networks with antennas and communication towers and require Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensing before construction can begin. Finally, NTIA is also considering additional National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) requirements for PSIC grant recipients that would increase the time needed to deploy new systems.

APCO International strongly urges the House to immediately pass H.R. 1819, and the Senate’s companion, that will extend the PSIC grant program for an additional two years.

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General, March 2009. Public Safety Interoperable Communications Program: Grantees Appear Unlikely to Finish Projects Within Short Funding Time Frame, DEN-19003. Washington, D.C.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, March 11, 2008. HOMELAND SECURITY: DHS Improved its Risk-Based Grant Programs’ Allocation and Management Methods, But Measuring Programs’ Impact on National Capabilities Remains a Challenge, GAO-08-488T, Washington, D.C., p.16.