

**Good morning and thank you for inviting me to address the members of your distinguished organization at your annual conference. It is an honor.**

**I have had the privilege of serving as chairman of the House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee for the past 8 years. During that time, I have worked diligently alongside my Democratic and Republican colleagues and with the emergency response community to put together legislation that will benefit your services personally and professionally.**

**To name a few:**

- ★ Act 129 of 1998 provided a college tuition waiver for the children of police, fire and EMS personnel who are killed in the line of duty.**
- ★ Act 157 of 1998 created the penalty for obstructing emergency services, at the scene of an accident or emergency, to a misdemeanor of the third degree.**
- ★ Act 158 pf 1998 allowed 14 and 15 year-old firefighters, or junior firefighters as they are often referred, to perform their duties until 10 p.m. on school nights, with parental consent.**

- ★ I sponsored Act 64 of 1999 to establish Pennsylvania's membership in the federal Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). Now, when disaster strikes, Pennsylvania and other member states can share resources and equipment without the hindrance of liability problems and cost reimbursement technicalities.
- ★ Act 66 of 2000, and the subsequent acts that have annually followed, established the \$25 million Volunteer Fire and EMS Grant Program. As well as provide a permanent consolidation incentive that will reduce the two percent interest rate for existing loans to one percent when volunteer fire departments merge.
- ★ In response to the Concept Sciences explosion in Allentown several years ago and input from public hearings, Act 121 of 2000 was enacted to update the reporting requirements for hazardous materials.
- ★ Much like the double fines for traffic violations and infractions in construction zones, Act 75 of 2001 created similar infractions for motor vehicle drivers in emergency response zones so that our responders are protected.
- ★ Act 115 of 2001 classifies Hepatitis C as an occupational disease for emergency rescue workers across Pennsylvania under the state's workers' compensation law.
- ★ Act 5 of 2004 increased the \$50 million bond authorization for the Volunteer Loan Assistance Act to a \$100 million bond authorization.
- ★ Act 48 of 2003 allows Fire and EMS training courses to be high school curriculum electives.

★ To further protect the family of an emergency responder, Act 59 of 2005 amended the Emergency Responder Death Benefit Act to include heart attack related deaths as a compensable line of duty death, and also increases the death benefit from \$50,000 to \$100,000, from then on adjusted annually for inflation.

As well, we have introduced and are deliberating various other measures that would help the emergency responder community ranging from requiring local governments to provide for fire and EMS services, creating a bulk purchase procurement project with the Department of General Services, increasing the amount awarded in bingo and small games of chance...one of the most popular methods of fundraising for our emergency responder community...and one of the important developments this year, the introduction of the first round of bills built from the Senate Resolution 60 commission, a special bipartisan legislative commission formed to develop and recommend legislation that provides direct and indirect assistance for the purpose of improving the delivery of emergency services in the Commonwealth.

For those of you who were in attendance yesterday, you had the opportunity to hear about a newer form of communication technology, Voice-over Internet Protocol...or VOIP.

**As you all know communication is a vital tool which every organization, especially yours, must properly utilize in order to perform their job effectively and efficiently. However, in order for you to be able to communicate and perform your job at 100 percent of your ability, our laws must keep up with the ever-changing communications technology landscape.**

**In 2003, I worked steadfast with the emergency responders of Pennsylvania to have Act 56 passed, creating a wireless E-911 emergency telephone system, funded by a monthly \$1.00 surcharge on Pennsylvania registered wireless phones. I want to personally thank NENA for their instrumental hand in the phase one and phase two build-out of our wireless system.**

**In the way of an update on the collection and disbursement of the wireless 911 fund monies...I am in the process of scheduling an informational committee meeting with Director Joseph and his 911 staff....thereby allowing the committee members to be provided with a full update on the program....followed by a question and answer period.**

**Last week, I sent a formal request letter to director Joseph, but we have not yet heard back to confirm the meeting. It is my sincere**

**hope that this important event will transpire on October 4<sup>th</sup> at the State Capital.**

**No one likes to be taxed and I don't like to have to raise taxes or implement a new tax. But, with the constant decline of land-line phones, our laws must change so that our 9-1-1 call centers and responders have the financial means to support the community with the best services.**

**For this reason, I have introduced House Bill 2333 as a continuation of the previous E-911 legislation. House Bill 2333 allows Voice-Over Internet Protocol communications to be surcharged in the same manner that land line phones are surcharged monthly in each county.**

**Many families, in fact possibly some of you here today, have replaced the traditional landline phone with either a cell phone or the cheaper, VOIP service. This has caused a drastic decline in funding received from the \$1.00 surcharge on landline phones and is straining budgets for the emergency response community.**

**Our emergency response workers will also benefit from this bill, if passed, because of the requirement that any person or business with**

**a multi-line phone system must upgrade to a system with Automatic Location Identification (ALI). By doing so, 9-1-1 dispatch workers and our emergency responders will be able to accurately locate a 9-1-1 caller located in a large building with many rooms, such as college dorm rooms, large apartment buildings, business office buildings, etc.**

**This legislation would not have been possible without the help of Mike McGrady, Dan Tancibock, Skip Wells, and other members of your organization for their technical assistance.**

**I have marked this as my top priority in the upcoming fall legislative session. Currently, the bill is sitting in committee in the Senate after being passed by the House this past spring. I have talked to the Majority Leader and other members and I am hopeful of future movement on House Bill 2333.**

**As you may or may not know, this is a Sine Die session, which means the bill must be passed by November 30<sup>th</sup> or else it becomes void and must be reintroduced next year. I will work diligently and ardently to have this legislation to the Governor before that time.**

**\*\*\*PAUSE FOR TRANSITION\*\*\***

**As you all know, communications is important. Communication is the key to any relationship: professionally or personally...and in your line of work, communication with fellow co-workers, fellow emergency responders and those in need can mean the difference between life and death. But, I don't need to tell you guys that.**

**When I think of proper communication, I often reflect upon an incident which happened during the Crimean War in 1854. I am sure that many of you are familiar with the infamous "Charge of the Light Brigade" which has now become immortalized in Alfred Lord Tennyson's epic poem of that same name. (PAUSE) A short paraphrase..."Half a league, half a league, half a league onward, all in the valley of death rode the six hundred...forward the light brigade...charge the guns!"**

**In terms of the legacy of this famous and courageous portion of this battle...one historical perspective is that this charge was unintended and really was the result of miscommunications between the general officer staff and the field commanders.**

**In short, Lord Raglan, the overall commander of the British troops, was perched upon a tall hill overlooking the various valleys of the battlefield. He noticed enemy troops in the vicinity of one of his**

**“prized” and unprotected gun batteries. Worried that these guns would be captured, he summoned Captain Nolan and gave him a sketchy note...with orders to proceed down the southern valley and wheel around the battery, thus protecting it from capture.**

**Well, when the cryptic message was delivered to Lord’s Lucan and Cardigan...they both scratched their heads in dismay and confusion.**

**At this point, Captain Nolan was asked to interpret the intent of this order...and he then told the field commanders that the order was to...”take the guns.” Without clarification of “which” guns were to be taken...the ill fated 600 rode into the opposite valley...directly into the enemies gun batteries which were located on all sides of the valley. In the end, hundreds were killed or wounded. Ergo, the charge of the light brigade became famous, and to this day, many still question why such an order was given, and why an entire brigade was directed into this meat grinder. As was stated in my previous remarks, one school of thought is the lack of proper communications.**

**Overall, I think that we can see, through a story such as this, just how important proper communication is to an organization. This is**

**why I work to implement the legislation necessary for your organization to operate at a clear and 100 percent efficient level.**

**It is important though, that groups communicate loudly and often with the General Assembly and with the Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness committees of both the House and Senate. If they have an issue or a concern, they must let their voice be heard...and I might add...your organization has done this magnificently...but there is still more to be done.**

**We strive to arm you with the funding and tools so that you can communicate with the community you serve and with those in need of emergency care. The 9-1-1 centers do not receive as much outward recognition as the firemen, police officers and EMS providers, but you are no less important. Without you, the other members of the emergency response team would have a very hard time doing their job...and for that, I say thank you.**

**\*\*\*PAUSE FOR TRANSITION\*\*\***

**This past Monday...five years ago...our nation saw just how important and heroic our emergency responders are.**

**Looking back to the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> attacks most people can remember exactly where they were at the time they heard the news about the first World Trade Center falling and exactly what they were doing when the second building collapsed.**

**Our country has come a long way in just five years. Our country is strong. A lot of men and women lost important people in their lives during the attacks - which would give most people a reason to break down and refuse to move on.**

**However, they didn't; they grieved but they moved on because they knew that was what their lost ones would want them to do. As an entire country- we grieved, remembered, prayed but moved on because we knew that would be best for our country. Instead of our enemies of the Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> attack laughing at our misfortune, they realized America is strong and nobody could bring us down.**

**I began looking around after the attacks and saw all the patriotism flooding our country. Everywhere I looked I saw the beautiful colors of red, white and blue attached to every business and home all over the state.**

**I saw memorial services, candle light vigils, and signs that said God Bless America. Generous donations in many forms were given to the families and victims of the attacks. Firemen and policemen gave up their important time to search for trapped and missing victims.**

**We've set new priorities in our country. Instead of children wanting to be basketball and football players, firemen and policemen have become their ultimate heroes. Working for the good of our country instead of playing a sport seemed to be more of an accomplishment in the eyes of our young.**

**It is important that we take from September 11<sup>th</sup>, the good things that happened. It is important that we not only remember those who died, but also those who lived. We must look to our emergency responders and military personnel who became the heroes of that day by understanding that their job was to protect and comfort the people who may have been unable to do so themselves. We thank them everyday for their courage, strength and passion for those in need and for humankind.**

**\*\*PAUSE\*\***

**As most of you know, I will no longer be your chairman after this year. I would like to take this opportunity to tell you all how blessed I am to have been able to work with such an incredible group of individuals. It has been a true honor and blessing to have been able to work with the emergency responder community. You are all an amazingly talented, hardworking and passionate group of individuals.**

**I do not know who my successor will be, but I assure you...there are many members out there that are ready and willing to take charge and fight for the needs of the 9-1-1 community. I believe that whoever is chosen as my replacement next year...that person will be a positive and exemplary advocate for the wants and needs of organizations such as NENA.**

**From the bottom of my heart...Thank you for this wonderful occasion to speak with you this morning and for everything you do for the communities you serve.**