

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

June 23, 2016

Howard A. Shelanski
Administrator
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
725 17th St. NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Administrator Shelanski:

As Co-Chairs of the Congressional Next Generation 9-1-1 Caucus, we write to urge you to update the classification of 9-1-1 call takers and dispatchers as part of the revisions to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC).

The SOC is a valuable tool for federal statistical agencies that helps classify workers into useful occupational categories and provides an accurate picture of the American workforce. The business community and government agencies depend on this information to be up to date and reliable. The ongoing revision process to SOC announced in May 2014 provides an opportunity to more accurately reflect the role of 9-1-1 call takers and dispatchers.

In the current version of the SOC, 9-1-1 call takers and dispatchers are labeled “Police, Fire, and Ambulance Dispatchers.” We support updating the detailed occupation name to “Public Safety Telecommunicators,” which better captures the complex and technical nature of these occupations and acknowledges the distinction from non-emergency dispatchers. Public Safety Telecommunicators are not just dispatchers. In some cases their job can entail simultaneously questioning the caller, dispatching first responders, and using advanced technologies to retrieve caller location, medical information, and pertinent location history.


The SOC should also be revised to recognize the public safety role played by Public Safety Telecommunicators through categorization with other “Protective Service Occupations.” Public Safety Telecommunicators perform tasks that share the same protective mission as law enforcement officers, firefighters, transportation security screeners, crossing guards, lifeguards, wardens and other occupations in the Protective Service Occupations major group. The current classification within the “Office and Administrative Support” major group is not consistent with the specialized training and life-saving nature of the tasks performed by Public Safety Telecommunicators.

Public Safety Telecommunicators receive calls from people in need of urgent help and their actions can mean the difference between life and death. We urge you to make to make these changes to accurately reflect the nature of their profession in the SOC. We also urge you to act quickly to publish the recommendations of the SOC Policy Committee in the Federal Register to provide sufficient time for public feedback before the anticipated publication of the final version of the revised SOC in the summer of 2017.

Sincerely,


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


Richard Burr
United States Senator


Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress


John Shimkus
Member of Congress