



## AFSCME STANDS WITH PUBLIC SAFETY DISPATCHERS/TELEOPERATORS 118<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS

Public safety emergency operators and dispatchers are dedicated public employees who perform critical and often dangerous jobs protecting our communities. AFSCME is proud to represent nearly 100,000 public safety personnel in over 40 states, including police, corrections, EMS and 911 emergency operators and dispatch professionals. These emergency operators and dispatchers deserve respect because their work answering and responding to 911 calls makes a big difference for people and their communities. One way AFSCME shows our respect for them is to fight for better pay and benefits, expanded bargaining rights, safer work conditions, and to uphold the standard of professionalism for the men and women in these vital public safety jobs.

### **911 Supporting Accurate Views of Emergency Services Act of 2023 (911 SAVES)**

Rep. Norma Torres (D-CA), who was an AFSCME member when she worked as a 911 emergency [dispatcher](#) in Los Angeles, has introduced the bipartisan 911 SAVES Act ([H.R. 6319](#)) because she recognizes the crucial role of 911 emergency operators and dispatchers. Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA) joined Rep. Torres as a leading co-sponsor when the bill was introduced in November 2023.

This bill would change how the federal government officially categorizes the work of 911 emergency operators and dispatchers. Currently, the federal government classifies these workers as doing “Administrative and Clerical” work. AFSCME believes this classification is wrong and does not accurately capture [or respect](#) the central role, duties and responsibilities of emergency operators and dispatchers. It also undermines access to training and other services typically provided to those in public safety jobs. The 911 SAVES bill would change the “emergency dispatchers” job category to a new “Protective Service Occupation.” While the classification change does not guarantee access to public safety officer benefits, mental health services or training, it is a critical first step toward those goals.

AFSCME supports the 911 SAVES Act because 911 emergency operators and dispatchers deserve respect and recognition for their part in protecting the public. These workers provide first responders, law enforcement and emergency medical services personnel with vital information before entering a potentially dangerous or unknown situation. Moreover, emergency dispatchers give lifesaving information including administration of CPR, crisis intervention services and sometimes respond to calls from the public on criminal activity, domestic violence, terrorism, kidnapping and other public safety concerns.

Rep. Torres and AFSCME have championed this bill – with support from Democrats and Republicans – since 2017. The bipartisan Senate companion bill is the Enhancing First Response Act ([S. 3556](#)), sponsored by Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Marsha Blackburn (R-TN). Beyond the reclassification, the Senate bill requires reports be made after the Disaster Information Reporting System is activated and to make improvements to network outages.

“As a former 911 dispatcher, I know how important it is for dispatchers to have the training and resources they need to successfully do their work and help save lives. Dispatchers are the first line of response during an emergency, and they deserve to be classified in a way that recognizes that their work is on par with that of other public servants classified as first responders. Given the challenges facing 911 dispatchers, I have continued to champion the 911 SAVES Act in Congress, which would reclassify dispatchers as emergency personnel. This bill will give public safety dispatchers the recognition they rightfully deserve, and I will keep fighting for its passage.” *Rep. Norma Torres (D-CA)*

“The services provided by our 911 operators and dispatchers are integral to the safety of every community across America. I thank Rep. Torres for her leadership in championing this crucial legislation that will give our public safety telecommunicators the recognition they rightfully deserve.” *Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA)*

## **AFSCME calls on Congress to Pass 911 SAVES Act.**

*February 28, 2024*

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*AFSCME’s 1.4 million members provide the vital services that make America happen. With members in communities across the nation, serving in hundreds of different occupations — from nurses to corrections officers, child care providers to sanitation workers — AFSCME advocates for fairness in the workplace, excellence in public services and freedom and opportunity for all working families.*