



# Representative Carolyn Hall

House District 16 | Turnagain, Spenard, and Sand Lake

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## **HJR38 Sponsor Statement**

“Urging the United States Congress to recognize public safety telecommunicators as first responders; and urging the United States Congress to pass the Enhancing First Response Act.”

Public safety telecommunicators, also known as emergency response dispatchers, are often called the **first** first responders, and are a critical part of our first responder system. Emergency response dispatchers are the first contact a distressed person has when calling 9-1-1. They deliver life-saving instructions before other first responders arrive, quickly calm people experiencing the worst day of their lives, obtain an accurate address and critical details, give instructions, and coordinate emergency responders within a few minutes of receiving that call. Patient outcome and emergency responder safety are directly affected by the dispatchers’ ability to perform this critical work.

Yet, the federal Standard Occupational Classification system classifies dispatchers under “Office and Administrative Support Occupations” instead of “Protective Service Occupations”, which is how their fellow first responder colleagues are classified. Reclassifying emergency response dispatchers will provide them with access to new training opportunities, grant opportunities for Alaska dispatch centers, access to wellness resources, and opportunities to receive enhanced retirement benefits, alongside their first responder colleagues.

Federal legislation, S.725, more commonly known as the Enhancing First Response Act, addresses their lack of recognition by reclassifying emergency response dispatchers to join their first responder colleagues under “Protective Service Occupations.” The Act includes additional provisions to protect public safety during times of disaster.

The Enhancing First Response Act, which passed the U.S. Senate and is under consideration by the House of Representatives, will recognize emergency response dispatchers for the critical role they serve during times of crisis and provide them with well-deserved access to resources that support their work. Reclassification will honor emergency response dispatchers for the life-saving role they play in our communities.

HJR38 makes it clear to the United States Congress that the Alaska Legislature supports emergency response dispatchers and urges swift passage of the Enhancing First Response Act.