

REVENUE: No revenue impact

FISCAL: Minimal fiscal impact, no statement issued

Action: Do Pass

Vote: 8 - 0 - 0

Yeas: Berger, Edwards C., Garrard, Gelser, Jenson, Nolan, Read, Roblan

Nays: 0

Exc.: 0

Prepared By: Jerry Watson, Administrator

Meeting Dates: 4/27, 4/29, 5/8

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Allows radio and data communications districts to be formed as special districts within all or part of one or more counties. Authorizes districts to acquire, maintain and operate voice and data communications systems for use by public safety agencies within their boundaries. Authorizes districts to contract with United States for acquisition and operation of radio and data communication facilities and related property. Takes effect on 91st day following adjournment sine die.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- Historical background on emergency services communication systems in Morrow and Umatilla counties
- Lack of any mechanism in current law to create radio and data communication districts as special districts
- Relationship to the Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network (OWIN)
- Potential cost savings to state and counties

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: This bill was referred to the House Rules Committee by prior reference after public hearing and a unanimous (8-0-0) Do Pass recommendation from the House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Services.

The Umatilla Chemical Depot (UMCD) is one of six Army installations in the U.S. that has stored and maintained the nation's chemical weapons stockpile. It is situated between Umatilla and Morrow Counties. UMCD is scheduled to cease operation in the spring of 2010. As part of the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program, the U.S. Army under federal mandate acquired, maintained and operated a tactical 450 MHz ultra-high frequency (UHF) communications system for on/off-post communication for 31 local emergency responders. Federal funding currently pays 100 percent of costs of the communication system during the process of destroying chemical agents and munitions.

When UMCD ceases to operate federal funding will also stop. However, the U.S. Army is expected to leave behind a tactical communications system, valued at \$14 million that has been used and relied upon by Umatilla and Morrow County emergency responders. Of the 14 radio sites in the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program, the Oregon Wireless Interoperability Network (OWIN) is scheduled to take possession of eight sites, while Umatilla and Morrow Counties will retain six sites. Proponents of House Bill 3254 assert the need to sustain current emergency response communication after federal funding ceases.

House Bill 3254 provides a mechanism for Umatilla and Morrow Counties to secure optional revenue streams by creating a special district that would fund and govern the system's operation and maintenance. Proponents estimate that as much as \$250,000 could be generated annually to operate and maintain the system, as well as an additional \$500,000 for replacements to local districts. Without authority for funding and management of the 450 MHz UHF system, proponents assert that the district may have to revert to the previously installed very-high frequency (VHF) system on which no additional investments have been made. Proponents further assert that the VHF system has been downsized significantly while increasing capacity on the 450 MHz UHF was doubled and many spare parts for the VHS system are now unavailable. This measure is not county-specific; the possibility of creating radio and data communication districts would be available to all counties.

5/18/2009 3:46:24 PM

This summary has not been adopted or officially endorsed by action of the committee.