

March 7, 2013

The Honorable Brian Boquist, Chair
Senate Committee on Veterans & Emergency Preparedness
354 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

Dear Chair Boquist & Members of the Committee:

Thank you for holding this hearing on Senate Bill 665. I have served as a member of the State Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC) representing the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) since 2003, and currently chair the SIEC Partnership sub-committee.

SB 665 is about responsible and accountable government. It is about improving service to the citizens of this state. In 2001, a national tragedy spotlighted the consequences of lack of interoperable public safety communications systems.

In 2002, Oregon established the SIEC to “develop recommendations for policy, identify technology and standards, and coordinate intergovernmental resources to facilitate statewide wireless communications with emphasis on public safety.” Our state communications systems were not interoperable and they were obsolete. Each applicable agency had its own system to manage and maintain. There was no long term plan for replacement or improving the technology. There was little or no cooperation between local governments or communications systems. There was no official recognition or plan to take advantage of the explosion of the technological advances that were just around the corner.

Over the last 11 years, the SIEC has worked to bring our state’s radios into federal compliance with narrow banding, we have worked on the State’s Emergency Communication Plan, and we have worked in support of the State’s interoperable Radio System. We have provided a forum for long term planning, discussion and review between the various public safety communications users, and the sharing of information and recommendations.

But most importantly, the SIEC has created a unique statewide partnership of those charged with public safety. Each of those partners “understands that weaknesses in the communications systems compromise our individual and collective ability to carry out our responsibility to serve and protect the public.” It is a reminder that we are all serving the same citizens within the same borders and that we often are responding to the same emergencies.

Now that our State Radio Project is nearing completion, we have the responsibility to ensure that this project truly remains a state system, interacting with the partners, and is ready and able to embrace new technology as it becomes available.

The SIEC recognizes Tom Lauer and his team at ODOT for their extraordinary work in completing the State Radio Project. But now that the project is moving into the maintenance

March 7, 2013
Senator Brian Boquist

level, the SIEC believes it is critical to maintain the SIEC's intergovernmental relationships that have been built over the last 11 years.

To this end, the SIEC is bringing SB 665 to you for consideration. SB 665 updates the membership, cleans up language previously in statute, and prepares Oregon to apply for competitive Federal grants with the next generation public safety data system. It puts this policy oversight body under the state agency that houses the state's Chief Information Officer and is responsible for long-term policy, planning and technology. This bill has been thoroughly vetted and voted on by the SIEC and has the agreement of DAS and ODOT.

Thank you for your time and I ask your support of SB 665.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy George". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kathy George
Commissioner, Yamhill County
Chair, SIEC Partnerships Subcommittee