



March 12, 2013

Representative Tobias Read  
House Revenue Committee  
900 Court St. NE, H-286  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support of House Bills 2035 and 2496

Dear Representative Read:

It is my pleasure to strongly communicate my support to several House Bills I believe necessary to secure our citizens' safety and to shore up a 911 system that has been stretched dangerously thin. First, HB 2035 and HB 2496 extends the current Emergency Communications Tax (the "9-1-1 Tax"). This emergency communications funding is vital to public safety and should be continued. HB 2035 extends the tax to year 2026, and HB 2496 extends to year 2020 - I support either and leave your good judgment to determine which is most appropriate.

Second, there are several bills that seek to ensure that pre-paid cellular devices are included in the Emergency Communications Tax, like funds that are collected from all other wireless phones and hard-line phones. HB 2036 is the most common sense approach to leveling the playing field on this front that ensures collection of those funds begin immediately in order to support the 9-1-1 system that is being utilized on behalf of those consumers on a daily basis. I urge your important work to pass this bill that will strengthen the 9-1-1 system via extension and clarification of the Emergency Communications Tax for the benefit and safety of all Oregonians. HB 2415 is essentially the same as HB 2036, though with an effective date of 1/1/15, and therefore, much less preferred. In my opinion, HB 2454 is simply too costly to administer and would make the objective to strengthen 9-1-1 system unachievable, or much less effective.

Adequately funded 911 services are an integral part of an effective public safety system. In a growing county, funding has not kept up with needs. The resulting stress on the 911 system is detrimental to individuals in need of those services. Oregon is one of seven states that decided to divert 9-1-1 funds in order to pay for budget shortfalls. 9-1-1 collected funds should be dedicated solely to the 9-1-1 system for the protection of the citizens in emergency who need help immediately. To continue to diminish Emergency Communications Tax Funds away from their stated purpose will create an increasingly unstable 9-1-1 system at the local level, and may ultimately jeopardize the integrity of the entire emergency response system.

Sincerely,

Pat Garrett  
Washington County Sheriff