
OREGON STATE SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 4055

In writing before the House Revenue Committee / February 4, 2014

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Chair Barnhart and members of the House Revenue Committee:

The Oregon State Sheriffs' Association is comprised of Oregon's 36 elected county sheriffs. Sheriffs take seriously their charge to be "conservators of the peace." Their role in public safety is broad, including routine patrol, investigating crime, search and rescue, marine patrol, jails, community corrections, court security, civil services and the issuance of concealed handgun licenses.

The 9-1-1/"Public Safety Answering Point" (PSAP) system is a vital link in the public safety system. Without it, Sheriffs and other first responders can't do their jobs. Oregon Sheriffs strongly support any legislative effort to ensure the PSAP system is fully and adequately funded. This is a two-edged sword. First, adequate funding is critical in and of itself. Second, when the state underfunds PSAPs, the system must be made whole through secondary funding by cities, counties and special districts. In essence, Sheriffs and others must underfund their own vital public safety obligations in order to shore up inadequate state funding.

The 9-1-1 tax was created to support the PSAP system. Unfortunately, time and again the legislature has taken money from the PSAP system to fund other priorities. This practice needs to stop.

Specifically, Oregon Sheriffs support:

- (1) Modifying the Emergency Communications Tax to include prepaid mobile devices; and
- (2) Ensuring monies paid into the Emergency Communications Account, including interest, are used exclusively for that purpose.

Sheriffs understand there are two competing proposals for how the tax should be collected on prepaid phones. Our highest priority is establishing a tax on prepaid phones this year regardless of the process. If the Legislature chooses the option with the higher collection cost, then the proposal should guarantee no less net proceeds to PSAPs than the estimates for the lower-cost collection option.

Thank you for holding a Public Hearing on House Bill 4055. Oregon Sheriffs stand ready to assist in any way possible to ensure the PSAP system is better funded.

Oregon State Sheriffs' Association

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