

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 128-A

Co-Chairs Shields and Williamson and Members of the Public Safety Subcommittee,

My name is Jon Stueve and I am here as a member of the Oregon State Police Officers Association asking for your support of Senate Bill 128-A.

State Police Telecommunicators provide a variety of unique services and possess a skill set that is not easily definable under current 911 language. State Police Telecommunicators operate from two command centers that provide around the clock dispatch services to all of Oregon's State Troopers across the 36 counties. State Police Telecommunicators attend and are certified alongside all of Oregon's 911 Telecommunicators. Mirroring the Troopers, the State Police Telecommunicators have a wide knowledge base that local 911 centers do not; they must understand motor vehicle code, fish and wildlife laws, interstate commerce, Oregon Revised Statutes, Oregon Administrative Rules, jurisdictional responsibilities/boundaries/resources for all of Oregon's law enforcement agencies, criminal law, civil law, Federal agencies their responsibilities/resources, Oregon state agencies responsibilities/programs, and have a working knowledge of Oregon geography.

While maintaining this level of knowledge, the State Police Telecommunicator must develop and maintain a level of skill not utilized in a 911 center. The State Police Telecommunicator must demonstrate strong multitasking ability by quickly and efficiently performing a variety of tasks while maintaining a collective sense of direction, officer safety, and customer service. A State Police Telecommunicator must also have a well-developed "split ear," the ability to distinguish multiple radio transmissions simultaneously from multiple channels. While these skills are an asset to any dispatcher or call-taker working at a local 911 center, they are magnified in their need and performance on a statewide level when talking about State Police Telecommunicators. A 911 dispatcher or call-taker can rest assured knowing that it is the same county, with the same officers, and policies day in and day out. State Police Telecommunicators are only sure that the phone will ring from somewhere in Oregon's 36 counties and that the officers they take responsibility for may start in Marion County and end up in Wallowa County.

In addition to the skill sets and knowledge base I have mentioned, these Telecommunicators also provide this service to a variety of agencies at no cost. The Department Of Corrections, State Forestry, Department Transportation, Department of Justice, US Marshalls, DEA, Bureau of Land Management, State Parks, and almost any other agency with a need to have statewide radio communications.

Besides offering a statewide emergency communication system, these Telecommunicators must be aware of the capabilities and services the State Police offer to other agencies, such as drug detection K9, DRE, Arson Investigation, SWAT, MRT, Explosives, Intoxilizer 8000, Forensics, AFIS, CCH, Firearms, Amber Alerts. We are also the secondary answering point for all of Oregon's 911 centers.

Support of Senate Bill 128-A will help mitigate an ever-increasing burden faced by Oregon State Police Telecommunicators: the recruitment and retention of qualified dispatchers and call-takers. Many Telecommunicators move on to successful careers at local 911 agencies using the skills they learned in the OSP Command Centers. Only a handful of 911 operators ever come to the State Police, for they lack the skills and knowledge that it takes to be a successful Oregon State Police Telecommunicator.

Please support Senate Bill 128-A. Thank you.

Jon Stueve
Oregon State Police Officers Association