

**Testimony Before the  
Senate Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness**

*Presented by: Mark Spross*

*February 21, 2017*

Chair Boquist and members of the committee, my name is Mark Spross and I appear before you today representing the Oregon combined chapters of APCO-NENA and Clackamas County Communications to present testimony in favor of Senate Bill 661.

APCO-NENA and Clackamas County both greatly appreciate your time and consideration moving this bill forward. We understand the burdens placed on our elected officials to maximize every dollar and know there are hundreds of critical programs at every level of government in need of funding. What we are encouraged to see in this bill is that it ensures the funds our citizens have paid for in the maintenance and operation of our 9-1-1 system in Oregon, will be used as promised.

Many citizens do not understand the complexity of the 9-1-1 system. They simply know they can call 9-1-1 and someone will be there to answer their call and get them the help they need. Most do not understand the time and money it takes to train a Telecommunicator. They are unaware of the costs associated with the equipment necessary to answer their call and to keep and maintain the infrastructure for phone lines including connections between the wireless and wireline phone company and the 9-1-1 centers.

Our 9-1-1 centers have not been able to keep up with technology changes. Although there are many reasons for this, the costs associated with moving from legacy based equipment to current technology is very expensive. Oregon is moving in the right direction as is evidenced by upgrades to our statewide infrastructure network and a roll out of text to 9-1-1 in the greater Portland Metropolitan area and parts of the Northern Coast. However, costs continue to grow to implement and maintain this equipment.

The 9-1-1 emergency access tax in Oregon has not been adjusted since 1995 even though the costs to provide these services has risen dramatically. In order to update equipment and infrastructure it is imperative to have money set aside for upgrades and maintenance. I understand how easy it might be to see a large amount of tax revenue and think that taking some funds to fill a deficit today might not be a big issue. However it is important to remember that any diversion of the 9-1-1 tax has great impact on our 9-1-1 system and our ability to meet the needs and expectations of our citizens in times of crisis.

The final important point for consideration is any diversion of the 9-1-1 tax will shift fiscal short falls from the state to the local communities who are charged with maintaining the first line of defense in our emergency response network.

I respectfully urge your support for Senate Bill 661.