

Testimony To The
Senate Veterans & Emergency Preparedness Committee
SENATE BILL 661

Presented by Kelly Dutra, WCCCA Director

Presented by Denny Doyle, Chair, WCCCA Board of Commissioners
Washington County Consolidated Communications Agency (WCCCA)
February 21, 2017

Honorable Brian Boquist, Chair, Vice-Chair Monnes Anderson, Committee Members:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Washington County 9-1-1, its Public Safety Agency Members, and the professionals who answer the calls of those in need and dispatch the appropriate responses to ensure citizens' health and safety across Washington County. We support Senate Bill 661, which prohibits "sweeps" of the Emergency Communications Account except in cases of fiscal emergency.

Since 2001, several attempts have been made to divert millions of 9-1-1 tax dollars. Governor vetoes stopped three of the diversion attempts, however, between 2001 and 2009, the fund lost \$14.4 million due to diversions. In 2009 HB3199 was passed, which swept all interest earnings on 9-1-1 tax revenue and redirected them to the General Fund. This sweep causes an estimated deficit of \$1 million annually in funds intended to support the 9-1-1 system and those who access the system for help.

The loss of any funding through the 9-1-1 tax revenue seriously compromises our ability, at the State and Local levels, to continue to meet the demands of our ever changing industry. For WCCCA, the funds received from 9-1-1 taxes currently represent only 20% of our operating budget. The burden to fund the remaining operations expenses falls to our local governments and their already stretched budgets, which becomes a more substantial impact each year. Any sweeping of the 9-1-1 funds creates further hardship on all of us to continue to provide the service which our public demands, expects and deserves with their tax dollars. Additionally, sweeps of dedicated 9-1-1 funds could jeopardize our ability to continue to collect these tax dollars as well as impede our ability to apply for federal grant dollars.

Technology is a driving force in all that we do – PSAP managers from across the state are planning and strategizing with the State 9-1-1 Office as we prepare for the evolution of Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG911) and the opportunities it will provide in protecting our citizens and aiding our responders. NG911 will open the doors to communications through texting, streaming photos and videos and data transfer, including data from vehicles in the event of an accident. This enhanced communication and functionality requires an upgraded network at the State and upgraded equipment in the PSAPs. The 9-1-1 subaccount holds the funds we and our taxpayers are relying on to pay for these large scale, very important, expenditures.

We urge you to support SB 661.

Please contact Kelly Dutra at kdutra@wccca.com for further information.