



www.ci.brownsville.or.us

City Hall
255 N. Main Street • P.O. Box 188
Brownsville, OR 97327 • 541.466.5666
Fax 541.466.5118 • TT/TDD 800.735.2900

April 1st, 2019

House Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness

Attn: Mr. Paul Evans, Chair

900 Court St, NE

Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support of HB 2449

Dear Chair Evans, Members of the Committee on Veterans and Emergency Preparedness,

I am writing in support of House Bill 2449. Every emergency dispatch center relies on the 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone tax to ensure dispatch can answer emergency calls. The public depends on dispatch to help them in their most critical times of need.

As you know, thousands of calls are placed each day to 9-1-1 in Oregon. Community members have an expectation that we will answer the call quickly and provide help. The public expects results. Critical infrastructure must be continually updated to allow for proper service delivery. The cost of maintaining the infrastructure capable of delivering emergency calls, in addition to personnel costs, have skyrocketed with technological upgrades that allow for enhanced data.

The 9-1-1 tax has not been increased since 1995.

Yet, the cost of doing business increases every single year. It is very clear to see the situation is dire. Tax monies collected are inadequate to cover system upgrades that are already past due. HB 2449 seeks to increase the tax to ensure we can deliver not only the current level of service, but to upgrade to technology that will help us be more efficient and effective in our jobs. ***This bill will additionally extend the sunset of the 9-1-1 tax.***

There will be a significant ripple effect if these associated costs have to be absorbed by the agencies or passed on to the users who pay for emergency services. This shift in resources that used to be covered by the 9-1-1 tax will have a direct impact to our local police, fire and medical responders. Local governments will also be negatively impacted. State and Federal requirements in other areas being mandated continue to shrink available resources. Public safety should not suffer.

I would respectfully ask for your consideration to remove the following provisions from HB2449:

1. The provision that provides 2% to counties with a population less than 40,000
2. The amount for Oregon Emergency Management 9-1-1 Program from 4% to 2%
3. Reduce the amount collected by the Department of Revenue from 1% to .05%.

I would also ask your consideration to add language that would specifically allow interest earned on the 9-1-1 tax to be held in an account to be used for future system upgrades. It is our sincere hope that our communities can depend on you all to consider adding specific language to at least begin the saving that will be necessary for our future 9-1-1 needs as it relates to technology and infrastructure buildout and security.

HB 2449 will help us ensure the communities we serve continue to rely on 9-1-1. We ask for your help because we need immediate assistance and we believe this tax would help support continuing these critical services at acceptable levels.

Sincerely,


Don Ware, Mayor
City of Brownville