



SHERIFF'S OFFICE

511 Washington St., Ste.102 • The Dalles, OR 97058
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April 22, 2019

Representative Nancy Nathanson, Chair
House Committee on Revenue
900 Court St, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support of HB2449

Chair Nathanson, Members of the House Revenue Committee:

Wasco County 911 is the 9-1-1 center for all of Wasco County. Our agency proudly answers 9-1-1 calls for all of Wasco County and dispatches for 2 law enforcement, and 11 fire and medical agencies in our area. Additionally, we also provide public safety emergency dispatching for city/county public works departments, parole and probation officers and mental health crisis response teams.

Wasco County 911 answers on average, 13,000 9-1-1 calls per year and we are extremely dependent on the technology and communications infrastructure to process each of these calls.

As you know, the 9-1-1 tax in Oregon has not kept up with inflation and has remained at .75 cents since 1995. HB2449 seeks to increase the tax and help ensure continued safe operations of our 9-1-1 network in the State of Oregon. The cost of operating a 9-1-1 center continues to rise based on fixed operational and personnel costs.

If we are unable to absorb the costs that have been paid by the 9-1-1 tax, our agency will be forced into a situation where calls may need to go into a queue or we may have a significant delay in answering calls simply because we do not have enough call taking positions or telephone lines within our PSAP to answer emergency calls while dispatching responders.

To put that in a real life perspective, last summer, during one of Oregon's worst fire seasons, the Wasco county 911 center dispatched 75 fire incidents, 1124 EMS runs, 9,000 law enforcement calls for service and 21,655 phone calls. This was all courageously done with just 2 dispatcher/call takers on at a time. In the aftermath of last year's fire season I reviewed some of the phone calls in which citizens had to let the phone ring 6 – 8 times after calling 911 before someone could answer. Once after answering the call, the call taker listened to the caller explain to them what it was like witnessing their family home burn to the ground or their crops go up in flames.



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I would also like to share with your committee that I'm not only the Operations Manager of the Wasco County PSAP, I'm a father whose family has had to rely on the Oregon State 911 system twice in the past 4 years to report the tragic loss of my two sons. Both times the call takers on the other side of the phone were compassionate to the feelings of my family and the awesome support that they personally reached out to me. These are the men and women of our state that deserve the extra funds to make their jobs just a little easier.

Currently the 9-1-1 tax does not have sufficient funds to pay for our 9-1-1 needs, nor does it have enough funds to plan for needed upgrades to the system. HB2449 helps ensure a more sustainable model for our emergency communications needs throughout the State of Oregon. We have already seen a shift from the 9-1-1 tax to the local level to support basic operations. We need immediate assistance to fix this deficit and ensure the 9-1-1 program in Oregon is funded to be that first line of defense for any emergency. We need your help to keep our communities in safe.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph A. Davitt".

Joseph A Davitt
Wasco County 911