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April 19, 2019

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RE Support of HB2449

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The Oregon joint Association of Public Safety Officials and National Emergency Number Association represent all of the Public Safety Answering Points, or 9-1-1 centers, in the State. Every one of those centers relies on the 9-1-1 Emergency Telephone tax to ensure we can answer emergency calls for assistance from our community members in Oregon. The public depends on us to help them in their most critical times of need.

Thousands of calls are placed each day to 9-1-1 in Oregon. Community members have an expectation we will answer the call quickly and help them. They expect us – rightfully so - to have well trained and capable personnel answering their calls as well as the critical infrastructure to deliver their emergency calls to our centers in a fast, efficient manner.

For more than 50 years we have been educating the public about 9-1-1 and every call, every day, we do our best to help those in need. Sadly, what we actually can do today is not in alignment with what we could be doing if we our critical infrastructure was updated to allow for delivery of enhanced caller location as well as text and video messages in every center across the State.

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. The cost of doing business for us has increased every single year. It is very clear our situation is dire. We are at a crucial point considering the tax money anticipated for collection this year will not be enough to cover any system upgrades already past due.

HB2449 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.

PSAPS in Oregon were recently notified that the State 9-1-1 program, within Oregon Emergency Management, would likely be unable to continue to fully fund our equipment upgrades and other costs associated with keeping our PSAP's functioning as they do today. Some of those costs will have to be – and are already being - absorbed by the agencies or passed on to the users who pay for our 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.

Oregon APCO/NENA is requesting your support of HB2449 to increase the 9-1-1 tax to \$1.50 and extend the sunset of the tax. We 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 we 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.

HB2449 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 us in continuing the critical and vital service we provide at the highest levels.

Thank you

Cathy Orcutt, President
Oregon APCO/NENA