

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:

Coos County Dispatch is the primary 9-1-1 center for Coos County. Our agency answers 9-1-1 calls for most of Coos County and dispatches for 4 police agencies, 13 small fire departments, and two ambulance services. We also provide 24 hour service for Bandon Power, (yes, a power company) and all other public works departments within our jurisdiction. We are a small center, and answer approximately 22,000 911 calls a year, and process 96,000 business line calls. We are very dependent on the 911 tax money, as it provides 38% of our budget at this time.

That being said, the 911 tax amount has remained static since 1995. This has forced our county budget to pay for more of our infrastructure and costs. We are a small county in an economically depressed area. Couple that with cuts that OEM (Oregon Emergency Management) may be forced to make and it's a recipe for disaster. OEM funds the installation, upgrades and continued care of our 911 telephone system. Our phone are not like an average desk phone, they are a computer system that links us to an ANI/ALI database, a highly detailed map system, and have features that no other phone system has. If they are not updated and upgraded on a regular basis, they won't function at optimum level.

Every time our costs to do business increase, it has a trickle-down effect. Higher 911 costs not covered by the 911 tax are passed on to local small government entities in the form of user fees. Many small rural fire departments cannot afford an increase, nor can smaller police agencies. We are fully staffed at 12, and that provides us enough staffing to have 2 dispatchers on at a time and also have coverage for sick time, vacation etc. If we lose staff, it affects our service, as well as our contracts with outside agencies.

I am realistic enough to understand that the 911 tax cannot fully support our entire budget, but an update to the tax to include for inflation and rising costs is well overdue. I want my department, as well as many others to be able to thrive, not just survive.

Respectively submitted,

JoAnne Beck
Coos County Dispatch
250 N. Baxter St.
Coquille, OR 97423
541-404-5404