

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1938

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS, APRIL 17, 1991

Brief Description: Creating a state-wide enhanced 911 network.

SPONSORS: House Committee on Energy & Utilities (originally sponsored by Representatives Fraser, Grant, May, Winsley, Roland, Riley, Miller, Phillips, O'Brien, Rasmussen, Sheldon, Basich, Ogden, Orr, Bray, Pruitt and Sprenkle).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REVENUE

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Thorsness, Chairman; Saling, Vice Chairman; Jesernig, Nelson, Patterson, Roach, Stratton, and Williams.

Staff: Phil Moeller (786-7445)

Hearing Dates: April 2, 1991; April 5, 1991

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators McDonald, Chairman; Bailey, Bauer, Cantu, Hayner, Johnson, L. Kreidler, Metcalf, Murray, Newhouse, Niemi, Saling, West, Williams, and Wojahn.

Staff: Terry Wilson (786-7715)

Hearing Dates: April 17, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Enhanced 911 (E911) is an emergency communications system wherein the caller can readily access law enforcement, fire, and medical assistance. The enhanced feature is an immediate display of the caller's location, which enables response even if the caller is not able to utter a word after dialing 911. With basic 911, callers must convey their location understandably to the public safety answering point.

The system is in place in populous areas and not in many rural areas. Current law allows county residents to vote to tax themselves up to 50 cents per month on their telephone bills to fund emergency communications systems. This amount of money is sufficient for populous counties but not for sparsely

settled counties to support E911 systems. The tax in many rural areas to fully fund E911 has been considered prohibitive and some dense-to-rural subsidy may be necessary to fund statewide E911.

E911 is available to 76 percent of the phone lines in the state and basic 911 to 18 percent of the lines. Six percent of the lines have no 911 coverage. The area served is quite another picture, with the percentages 18, 50, and 32, respectively. This illustrates the concentration of telephone lines, chiefly in the Puget Sound area.

People living in densely populated areas could have need for 911 use while vacationing in rural areas. Out-of-state tourists could have the need anywhere. E911 has potential life saving advantages over basic 911, and both manifestly so in comparison to no 911 at all.

The 1990 Legislature directed the Utilities and Transportation Commission to study statewide implementation of E911 and the commission found implementation feasible and achievable with a minimum of additional state bureaucracy. The telephone line tax is recommended for continuation as a funding source. The study estimated \$16.5 million to implement and \$6 million per year subsidy to operate E911 statewide. A subsidy initially of 20 cents per telephone line per month was estimated as needed to implement the system. A lower subsidy will maintain operation statewide after implementation.

SUMMARY:

The Director of the Department of Community Development, through a State Enhanced 911 Coordinator, shall coordinate and facilitate implementation and operation of E911 statewide.

E911 shall be implemented statewide by 1998. A State Enhanced 911 Coordination Office is established, headed by the Enhanced 911 Coordinator. The coordinator will coordinate and facilitate statewide implementation and operation of E911, assisted by the Enhanced 911 Advisory Committee, made up of relevant professionals.

The current optional 50 cent per month excise tax on telephone lines is made mandatory statewide. Proceeds from this tax remain in the county. An additional excise tax is levied statewide, also on telephone lines, for statewide implementation of E911. This additional tax will enable implementing E911 in rural areas. The Department of Community Development will recommend the level of the tax and it will be set by the Utilities and Transportation Commission. Limits are set at 20 cents per month per line until 1998, then 10 cents per month. The proceeds will be deposited in an a nonappropriated account, to be administered by the Enhanced 911 Coordinator for statewide implementation of E911.

With limited exceptions, telecommunications companies providing consolidated communications systems and related services are not subject to liability in conjunction with

providing these services. Providing information to enable public health or public safety agencies to respond to E911 calls is not a privacy violation.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE WAYS & MEANS AMENDMENT:

The local tax is made a local option tax, but the counties are required to provide funding for the system. The account in which the state tax is deposited is made an appropriated account. The bill is referred to the people for approval and ratification.

TESTIMONY FOR (Energy & Utilities):

This system will extend the lives of many citizens when it is implemented statewide.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Energy & Utilities): None

TESTIFIED (Energy & Utilities): PRO: K. O. Rosenberg, WA State Assn. of Counties; Mike Woodin, AT&T; Thera Bradshaw, Clark Regional Communications; Pat Williams, BWA Assn. Inc., Clark County; Mildred Johnson, Senior Lobby; Jim Goche, WA Assn. of County Officials; Bill Vogler, WA State Assn. of Counties; Robert K. Udell, Yakima County; Gail Finley, Dept. of Health; Mike Patrick, WSCPO; Dave Williams, Randy Hamilton, WA Assn. of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Mildred R. Trapelle, Grays Harbor E911 Comm.; Jim Quackenbush, APCO; Noel Mhyre, National Emergency Number Assn., Pierce County Fire Commissioners; Polly Keith, Whatcom Communications; Raymond E. Isaacson, Benton County Commissioner; David Rutherford, WA State Grange

TESTIMONY FOR (Ways & Means):

There is a need for an equal level of service statewide. Currently, 80 percent of the population are served by E911 service but not 80 percent of the geographical area of the state. There is concern over the referendum clause.

TESTIMONY AGAINST (Ways & Means): None

TESTIFIED (Ways & Means): Bill Vogler, WA State Assn. of Counties (pro); Tom Casey, WA State Grange Assn. (pro); Bob Bratton, GTE (pro); Jim Quackenbush, APCO/NENA (pro); Tom Walker, US West (pro); Jack Doyle, Pacific Telecom (pro); Susie Tracy, WA Ambulance Assn (pro)